

THE FRIAR
OF WITTENBERG

WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS



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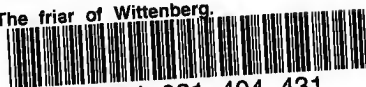
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THE FRIAR OF WITTENBERG



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THE FRIAR OF WITTENBERG

BY

WILLIAM STEARNS DAVIS

AUTHOR OF "A FRIEND OF CÆSAR"
"GOD WILLS IT," ETC.

New York

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THE FRIAR OF WITTENBERG

PROLOGUE

AT THE COURT OF HIS HOLINESS

CHAPTER I

A ROOM IN THE VATICAN

"MARTIN LUTHER — yes, the name of that fool of a German comes back to me."

"You were going to tell a story about him, *Eminenza*," I remarked.

"A very brief and scurvy story." The Cardinale di Forlì stretched out his red-slippered feet, and reached languidly for the carafe of Chianti upon the table at his elbow. He had already emptied the cup several times and his thick lips were a little flushed. "It was six years ago — 1511, to be exact, I remember; just before my lucky elevation. Well, I was then lodging at our convent near Santa Maria in Ara Coeli. I was the prior and manager, and very good dinners we had. What must needs happen but that stupid northern brute of a friar should visit Rome, and demand hospitality at our convent. Ugh! but what an unkempt rogue! He had come from Wittenberg, some den or town up in your frozen north, on business for his order before the papal chancery. We tried to show him kindness, and it was as good as a mummer's play to see the way the fellow ran around to visit all the holy spots in the city. I doubt if there was a smoky shrine at which he didn't burn a candle,

or a dirty saint's relic he didn't want to see. He was amazingly anxious to go everywhere possible to heap up indulgence for the souls of his parents, and one day I told him about the Scala Santa. 'Just mount the Holy Stairs on your knees,' I advised, 'say a prayer on each of the twenty-eight, and though your father were a bandit and your mother a witch, the devil will never get a glimpse of them in the hereafter.' So off he went like one possessed, but came back much sooner than I thought. 'Did you mount and pray on the stairs?' I asked. 'Reverend prior,' answered he with a bad genuflection, and worse Latin, 'as I knelt on the middlemost stair it seemed as though a voice spoke to me from heaven, "The just shall live by faith!"' I arose and descended without kneeling on the rest.' 'The just shall live by faith!' That from a bristly boar! Oh! his lousy impudence! He was so utterly comical I had to laugh in his face."

"The incident is vastly entertaining," interposed the other member of our conference, his Eminence of Rocca, "but the Cardinale di Forli will allow me to remind him that I have a dinner appointment with a lady by the Ponte Molle, and that we have much to discuss."

"Ah, yes," returned Forli, good-humoredly, tossing down his cupful, "so business before pleasure —" And he reached for a pile of papers upon the table. . . .

A handsome, well-groomed man was Forli, barely gray, and becoming somewhat stout from abundant good living, though his red robes and red biretta could make him look half saintly when he rolled in his open carriage down the Corso. His companion, the Cardinale di Rocca, a leaner, younger personage, was in civilian costume, the latest achievement of his Venetian tailor, and even now he was glancing down with satisfaction upon his party-colored red and green hose, delicately embroidered with falcons and

herons in gold thread, his black velvet doublet with its slashed sleeves, and the large jewelled buckles upon his morocco shoes.

The room wherein we found ourselves was one of those numberless huge, rambling apartments upon the upper floor of the Vatican. It was richly furnished in a dark heavy way, with a good "Annunciation" (I believe by Timoteo Viti) upon the wall, Persian carpets under foot, and three wide windows opening gloriously upon the wide Vatican gardens, whence — a great distance below — sounded the shouts of a bevy of young court chamberlains and court ladies at some game, mingled with the dull clicks of the masons chipping on the marble blocks for the rebuilding of S. Pietro. Forli of course had his own palace in the city, but like the other Papal vice-chancellors, preferred to keep a few rooms at the Vatican, since he wished to be in easy touch with His Holiness. Here he had arranged for us to meet him.

"Draw your chair nearer, Gualtiero," he motioned to me, "and you also, Rocca. I take it the servants are out of earshot, but stones and plaster in the Vatican tell tales. Ahem! We've not discussed the matter fairly yet. Since the Conte di Palaestro is so interested —"

"I cry your pardon, Eccellenza," I interposed, "I prefer the Cardinale di Rocca shall know me as the Graf von Regenstein."

Forli's good humor was not shaken. "As you wish it," he laughed, "let me tell Rocca, then, that you are the son of the Graf von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein (do I get your barbarous German aright?), that most valorous condottieri who did Popes Alexander Borgia and Julius such rare service, and who showed himself wise beyond his people by marrying the Contessa di Palaestro. Whereby their noble son and heir here is by title at once 'Regenstein' and 'Palaestro,' —

although why, being Italian born and bred, he prefers his outlandish northern name, may the Madonna tell me — he cannot tell himself!"

And then with another good-natured shrug he began unrolling the papers.

"So, then, we are agreed that the Archbishop of Bari should be displaced, and his benefices divided?"

Rocca nodded, his thin lips curling. "He was asked on the hunt only last week by His Holiness — surest sign he is in succession for the next creation."

"The cardinals will hardly consent to that," I suggested, "the college is over large already."

Forli shook his head. "I know the Pope. He smiles blandly and denies when you hint 'more cardinals,' but I understand positively he is resolved. There will be another red hat in a twelvemonth, unless Bari is ruined — or removed" letting his voice drop.

"And I," thrust in Rocca, "have had my eyes since Easter on that benefice of his in Aragon. Mine as soon as he leaves it vacant! Haven't I paid good gold for the reversion? And the income, six thousand florins; what a godsend in my present debts and poverty!"

"I share your anxiety, my dear Rocca," returned Forli with benignity. "The reasons I wish Bari away from home are more personal, although he holds one or two other preferments I would be glad to add to my own, — a priory in Flanders, with a very good little canonry somewhere near Bordeaux. And our dear Gualtiero here — his interest, of course, is yet more immediate."

"The conte then has decided to seek advancement in the Church?" asked Rocca, glancing at me keenly.

"I have not really considered it until very lately," I replied; "but the continued favor of His Holiness has led me to feel that my ambition might lie there, and if the Arch-

bishopric of Bari were offered me, I presume I could gratify my friends by ceding the dependent benefices. I am passing rich," I added a little proudly; "it would be the preferment, the opportunity, of course" —

"Never despise the florins, my friend!" cried Forli, paternally; "recall the old Tuscan proverb, 'Good cats mouse better just to grow fat, than from mere hunger.' Still, we will not decline Bari's benefices, — eh, Rocca?"

"No — by Santo Paolo!"

"Don't swear by the old saints, Rocca," urged Forli, frowning; "very vulgar: the worthy Bembo, our arbiter of letters, would be incensed. 'By Jupiter!' 'By Diana!' those are the oaths for philosophers and gentlemen. Yet again to business: we are agreed Bari has become dangerous to my influence with His Holiness, to Rocca's pocket, to Regenstein's ambition. The Archbishopric of Bari once vacated, it will take only a timely hint to secure it for our Gualtieri, who will, of course, be content to wait a few years for the actual cardinalate."

"I will," I assented, "yet, Eminenza, consider that his present Holiness raised his nephew to the red hat, though only twenty-one years old; I am twenty-five —"

"But hardly a kinsman of His Holiness," smiled Forli; "a vast difference. Yet patience, — Leo de' Medici is living a long while for a pope. That abscess which got him so many votes at the conclave may break out again at any time, and then —"

He waved his arms with true Italian elegance. "We trust the conclave will appreciate the learning, eloquence, and ah, — the piety of the Cardinale di Forli," completed Rocca.

"Grazie!" cried the other, half rising.

"I consent, gentlemen," I said, a trifle bored at the meandering of the conversation. "I understand you do not wish to attack Bari unless you can propose me as his successor;

otherwise, some candidate of the Cardinale di Metaponto would reap all your reward. I consent to aid your undertaking, and I pledge myself not to lack in gratitude. Yet wisdom would advise due caution in compassing the disgrace of Bari."

"Disgrace?" echoed both cardinals, looking at me a little blankly.

"I used the word, reverend sirs."

"Why," smiled Rocca, blowing through his teeth, "I presume there is after all some disgrace in dying with great abruptness."

Before I could make answer, a polite knock upon the door brought a "Pestilenza!" from the lips of Forli, but he promptly called out to enter.

The stranger was a dapper little man all in black, with a black chin beard, and long, clawlike hands and fingers.

"Pardon, a thousand pardons, for intruding upon my masters," he began, almost ere he had straightened himself after a profound bow; "but knowing your excellencies' admiration for all objects of virtue, I venture to intrude to tell you that the 'Crucifixion,' by Messere Raffaello, being completed, is now this instant on exhibition at the end of this gallery. No doubt you will be pleased to see it."

Not a cloud seemed to darken Forli's face as he rose and signed to us to follow.

"We thank you, Signor Primati; indeed we are not so busy but that we can give ourselves the pleasure of a hasty inspection."

Rocca and I could do nothing save accompany him, and of what followed I have no need to speak at great length, save how we all agreed that the distinguished artist had surpassed almost all his earlier triumphs in dealing with such themes.¹

¹ This picture seems to have perished in the sack of Rome in 1527 A.D. — Editor.

Very happily he had grouped the weeping women before the cross; and in the face of the agonizing Madonna I recognized a most fortunate treatment of the features of the famous Fornarina, his mistress, the baker's daughter from the Trastevere, while in St. Peter, St. John and others, I noticed well-known Roman ecclesiastics. I was especially pleased to see Forli's daughter, my own beloved Marianna, portrayed as Mary Magdelene, although in so doing the artist had been obliged to depart from custom, and represent her with dark instead of golden hair.

It was, in short, a masterpiece, even for the master, and well repaid the interruption. Rocca and I also were given a new opportunity to observe that just power of critical appreciation which made Forli so esteemed among the art patrons of Rome.

"The foreshortening of the arms of the impenitent thief — how admirable! The reflection upon the helmet of the centurion to the left could hardly have been better. I could wish Messere Raffaello could have concentrated more light upon the cross. A mere trifle. He's wise in avoiding over-theatrical effects. And notice the chiaroscuro of the background: that magnificent fork of lightning over Jerusalem! I congratulate you, Signore Primati, upon having the oversight of such a picture. Imagine the delight of His Holiness."

"I knew your excellencies would be repaid," replied the custodian, rubbing his lean little hands. "Messere Raffaello will rejoice in your kind judgments. He was so fearful of your verdict, I could not induce him to remain. He has slipped away, not daring to await your august decision. Ah! New pleasure, — I see the most worthy Sanazzaro coming to bestow his approbation upon your Eminenza's opinion."

The newcomer was a sleek, well-oiled gentleman, sprucely dressed in a tight-fitting suit of mouse color, with only a quill pen behind an ear to show that he called himself a professional

scholar. He was full of fine phrases for us, and laudations of the picture, which last were obviously perfunctory, for it soon appeared, to the vast disgust of Primati, that he had come not to admire the painting but to submit to Forli about forty new lines of his half-finished epic, "The Virgin Birth," and to crave the cardinal's wisdom upon certain doubtful quantities and Latinisms, a judgment in which he politely invited Rocca and myself to join; and Forli, pleased to show the same mastery of one art as of another, made haste to run over the hexameters, bestowing a profusion of compliments, intermixed with tactful criticism.

"The introduction of the cattle in the stable at Bethlehem, — charming and natural. But *bos* — a crude and grating word — is scarcely used in this sense by Seneca or Cicero. Again you speak of 'Our Lord coming for the remission of our sins.' Excellent, thrice excellent were we mere theologians, but a poet with such an exalted theme might with more dignity say 'Apollo come to bear the divine pity of the Manes.' Happier, is that not? And more genuinely classical and Latin? But the next two lines — how delicately you throw the accent upon this *venisset*. Yet I cannot approve this 'Virgo Maria'; 'Virgo Diana' is the only proper term, as I observed before; I crave your opinion in this, my dear conte, your Latinity is impeccable."

"I agree with you, Eminenza," I assented, "although in view of the theme, some slight concession might be made in the nomenclature."

"Consistency, consistency," urged the senior cardinal. "Signor Sanazzaro is not writing for ignorant monks, but for men of true learning and *virtù*. You will find all the best authorities on my side, — Bembo, Pomponazzo, Politiano, Pontano, and many more. Purge away these small blemishes, my noble friend, and who dare not hope that the 'Virgin Birth' may not enjoy the immortality of the 'Æneid'?"

"The Eminenza's praise is overpowering," smiled the poet, receiving back the paper with a profound reverence; "but I fear I have intruded upon some grave conversation. I invoke the blessings of Olympus upon your excellencies, and crave leave to depart." With which he bowed himself away.

Rocca, mindful of his own appointment, was clearly glad to have him gone, nor did I wish to detain him. Primati had already quitted us, and as the poet's smart mantle disappeared down the gallery, Rocca at once broke in with,

"Now let us resume the former discussion."

"About 'the Crucifixion'?" I asked.

"About the assassination," corrected Forli, smiling gently, and beckoning us back to his chamber.

I suspect the others had already noticed my reluctant manner, for by the time the door was closed behind us Rocca had me by the arm and was demanding: "Wherefore do you look so sour?"

"Because," I retorted bluntly, "I do not enjoy the answer given me by his Eminence of Forli," at which the elder cardinal burst out in a hearty laugh.

"Assassination? Well, by Jupiter, the word is uncouth, and we will find one that will sit better on squeamish German stomachs! Say, then, we discuss the means for the withdrawal, departure, translation to a happier Elysian field than Rome of the learned and pious Monsignore di Bari."

I could see both Forli and Rocca watching me with the same glance itinerant students fix on younger neophytes, when testing their ability to drain a very deep flagon. But I was resolved not to let myself be browbeaten. "Your Eminences," I said a little crossly, "do not think I fail to appreciate the service you have proposed to do a very young man like myself; but you must not think me ungrateful if I say I did not contemplate the murder of the Archbishop of Bari when I accepted this appointment."

"And what, pray," drawled Rocca with insulting irony, "did the estimable Graf von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein conceive we *did* purpose to arrange at this charming tête-à-tête?"

I was aware I seemed to play the fool. I was no stranger at Rome. However, I refused to capitulate.

"You told me to come and concert the displacement of Bari. Good. I will do so. So far I go with you. He has intrigued against His Holiness with the King of France. We can secure proofs. The Spanish Ambassador will aid us. My body-servant Andrea knows some women in Bari's household; through them we can get gossip to be used against him. A little cleverness — such as your Eminences can so readily supply — will suffice to send Bari an outlaw to Paris. Assassination becomes doubly a crime when it is needless."

Forli sat back in his arm-chair, complacently twirling his thumbs.

"My dear Gualtiero," he said slowly, "despite your Germanisms I love you well, and so of course does Marianna. But I confess it is your thick northern wits that now are working, not your Italian ones. You stick at poison or dagger, but a man's fair name or riches you would filch with all merriment: though betwixt a swift, easy death, and an outlawry with Donna Poverty for companion and mistress — *pro dei immortales!* give me the dying! Besides, your scheme is impracticable. You know how strong French influence is with His Holiness, King Francis will move heaven and hell to save a precious adherent from disgrace. Bari is a skilful huntsman, a good Latin versifier, and plays excellently at cards — three strong reasons why Leo will hesitate to believe ill of him. In fine — *amico mio* — you are brought back to only one way, — a very short one."

I stood drumming with my fingers on the window-sill, staring stupidly out into the Vatican gardens. I could not con-

travert the practical arguments of Forli. Bari's position with the Pope was nigh impregnable. I could not give warning of the plot concocted by an intimate friend and the father of my lady-love, — and of these facts the others were quite aware. I had always expected some day to be dragged into a plot like this — and had dreaded it. But what must be must. After all, the murder was not of *my* contriving. Meantime Forli conferred eagerly with Rocca.

"Well — how manage it?"

"I always liked Pope Alexander Borgia's way — an invitation to dinner — a box of sweetmeats put within tempting reach —"

"Ugh!" interrupted Forli, "I was almost nipped thus at Siena four years ago, — took medicine just in time. But it will not do now. Bari distrusts us. He'll accept none of our invitations."

"A fee to his cook?"

"Very uncertain. Sometimes such servants are devilishly faithful."

"Then we seem driven to look for bravoës."

"Very right. Bari is reckless where he goes. I know where his lady friends live and when he visits them. It can be managed. I used to know the proper man, but he got himself hanged and quartered up at Ferrara last autumn."

Rocca scratched his chin meditatively.

"I believe Ettore Orosi is in Rome. His price, however, would be very high."

"He who put the Duke of Gandia in the river, and later cut down the Cardinal of Pavia, whilst he was on his way to visit the Pope?"

"The same man. I think I can reach him. My valet saw him yesterday — just returned from Naples."

"We must pay his fee. A very proper man," Forli was reflecting aloud, when I turned upon them angrily.

"Reverend sirs, I repeat to you, despite my southern breeding I am northern enough not to enjoy this calm discussion of a bandit's business. You understand that, if you continue in the act you propose so deliberately, I will have no part therein. I cry pardon for my discourteous tone, but I trust you both understand me."

"You will not refuse the Archbishopric, however," sneered Rocca wolfishly.

"Pious sirs," I retorted, "an old proverb, current in many tongues, warns against dividing the bear's skin ere slaying the bear."

Forli brought his hands together with a smart slap.

"My dear Gualtiero," spoke he, smiling, "I once counted myself the happy intimate of the illustrious Prince Cesare Borgia. I may humbly claim some modest experience in these and other like delicate matters. When I have fairly made my pact with Orosi, Bari will not be in danger. Bari will be — in heaven. The chance of a slip is not worth an argument."

I felt the disadvantage of my position and reached rather stiffly for my biretta.

"Eminenzas," I announced, "you know I am bound to you by the ties of hospitality and friendship to do nothing to warn Bari. I owe him no love, and will gladly pleasure you in aiding to work his downfall; but I am fain to recall the command my honored father gave me before his last campaign, — 'slay your man, but with the sword, not the stiletto.' If, therefore, you continue in your present intent, I can only wish you a very good day, and avow I have no part in your deliberations."

I was moving towards the door, but Rocca called after me.

"Ah! noble conte, you do so recall to me that very illustrious Roman, Pontius Pilatus, who once washed his hands when he saw the Jews doing something very wrong."

"I do not thank you for the simile, Cardinale di Rocca," I said, with my hand on the latch, "but if I am Pilatus, I leave behind me Caiaphas and Herod. And so, *addio!*"

I walked away briskly, thoroughly angered at being made party to so crude a transaction. (I did not at that time use a harsher adjective.) I was in fact, in great ill-humor, and was about to work it off by seeking some gayer friends on the Corso, when, upon descending the stairs, I ran upon a grinning Moorish boy who, "Begged to inform his lordship that Donna Marianna awaited him in the Vatican gardens."

CHAPTER II

MARIANNA

I MADE my way downward through the huge palace, bowed to this red robe and to that, exchanged greetings with various "Gentlemen Chamberlains" whom I called my friends, promised Monsignore the General of the Dominicans that I would loan him a parcel of Greek books just come from Aldus's press at Venice, and congratulated Messere Bibbiena on the piquancy and wit of his last comedy — in short, I moved on my way as became a man who knew how to avoid both discourteous haste and needless dallying; until at the entrance gate of the gardens the yellow-clad Swiss guardsman on duty saluted with his halberd, and before me opened the delightful masses of cool shrubbery and green lawn interspersed with the white marble of statuary, — the charming confines of the gardens that I knew so well.

As stated, I was not in good humor. No man could live in Rome, as I had lived in recent years, and fail to come close to deeds which non-Italian folk must needs call murder. Only the year before I had stood with my back to a wall and my rapier and three bravoës before me until timely help arrived; and I had met the instigator of those bravoës at a supper party not long since, — as polite and polished a nobleman as ever graced a court. Yet I had never actually been myself a prime mover in an assassination. I had killed my man in a duel, but that was another matter. I strongly suspected the cardinals had summoned me in, not to secure my help, but to laugh at my squeamishness, and I was inclined to wish that

Orosi would grievously disappoint his employers, and turn the laugh against them.

"After all," I reflected, "I am not certain that I wish to enter the Church; and if I do, His Holiness can give me a better preferment than this debated to-day."

Likewise the memory of sundry injunctions of my father (grizzled warrior) must needs at such times ring in my ears, especially his word just ere he was slain at Ravenna. "You have your mother's hair and eyes, my Walter, but your heart is from me; and remember that long as I have lived in this merry southland my heart is German. Live like a German, think like a German, and remember the German honor — the honor of the Regensteins. Many of us have been caught by the Devil; but never has the Devil caught us in the back!"

"And may the Devil eat Orosi, and Forli, too!" I at length muttered. "If the chance comes, I am even minded to give the wink to poor Bari."

Yet despite my mood I quickened my steps, for I knew my lady would be ungracious over delaying. One or two excursions into the nooks of shrubbery failed to discover her, and I was a little at a loss until I ran upon one of the smooth-lipped eunuch-sopranos of His Holiness's choir, who informed me that Donna Marianna was walking with a gentleman of the Spanish embassy, near the Pope's casino; and so near the garden lodge I found her.

Don Velasco let his mustaches quiver with vexation when he saw me, — surely he was having a most pleasant stroll under those splendid box trees: but Madonna knew how to do an ungracious thing graciously. Very politely she explained that the Conte di Palaestro was present by appointment: very ceremoniously Velasco and I scraped and flourished as he bade us farewell. Not until he was fairly out of sight behind a curve in the leafy way did her white hand go out to me,

as I fell on my knees and kissed it; then I rose for a fairer kiss upon my lips, whereupon I forgot our conversation; for were we not close together, I at least intoxicated by the glory of her presence, and the mere joy of her companionship?

Years ago it was; and years how full of many things! Yet the richness of those moments in the Vatican gardens lingers with me still. And if you could have seen her then, with the gold of that Latin sunlight pouring itself over her, you would not have wondered that all Rome called me as lucky in my love as in my fortune. For Marianna's beauty was the hot dark beauty of the south, — of Trojan Helen, of Aspasia, or more likely of Poppaea Sabina, enchantress of Nero. Angel she was not. Pinturicchio's and Perugino's seraphs had never such raven hair, nor that full bare neck, nor the black eyes, the cheeks of cream and rose color tinted by the Neapolitan sun: also their glances were mild and dove-like, not lit by Queen Juno's wit and fire. Still do I see her, as she walked with me; the springtime sun glowing on her face and forehead, on her long arms, on the Arabian pearls upon her hair, the Egyptian turquoise at her throat, and the full satin sheen of her scarlet dress and golden girdle; while all the time her hands flew in those quick Italian gestures, accenting the music of her voice. Verily, were not the Vatican gardens even as the gardens of the Hesperides to me that hour? And would I then have accepted heaven had an archangel offered it?

But at last we were ready to talk of many matters, and plainly Marianna had somewhat to ask.

"So, Gualtiero, you have seen my father?"

"I have just left his chambers."

"And who was there?"

"Why, Rocca — a little criticism of some of Sanazarro's verses —"

Marianna shook her head charmingly.

"Manifestly, Gualtierio, your wits were made in the north. Did my father and Rocca meet solely to weigh Latin metres?"

"I do not understand, *cara mia*."

"The Conte (she called me thus to make me vexed) is disingenuous. I will refresh his memory. He was asked if he did not wish to enter the Church?"

"I was." It displeased me Forlì had revealed matters to his daughter. I always discussed with Marianna at disadvantage.

"And of course you consented?"

"How fast that green lizard runs across the path," I observed, trying to change the subject.

"Not more fast than a thousand others. Tell me,—are you to be Archbishop of Bari?"

"When I found precisely what their Eminences had to propose," I replied constrainedly, "I was obliged to decline my share in the project."

"Excellent!" she clapped her hands prettily. "I have won my wager with Rocca! His best white palfrey against my Moorish boy."

"Your wager with Rocca?"

"Assuredly. You remember the horse races in the Piazza di San Pietro? I sat with Rocca near His Holiness at the Vatican windows. We talked of you and your northern ancestry. Rocca vowed you had become wholly Italian, a true virtuoso and humanist. I rejoined I knew you better. You would fight a score of duels, but never hire a bravo. He doubted. We laid a wager. My father's plans fell in well with the test. He has long held you must enter the Church, in justice both to yourself and your friends. Bari of course has been a marked man for months. To-day the bait was proffered you. *Ecco!* I have won."

With any save Marianna, I would have been exceeding angry, but with her hand upon my wrist, her breath almost

upon my face, I think she could have said, "I will feed you to the Hydra," and I would have cheerfully assented. After I had finished laughing at her pleasantly, I asked why she seemed so anxious to have me enter the Church.

"Because, Gualtiero *mio*, look on the world, — I mean, of course, Italy. What secular prince is of consequence? Did not Cesare Borgia have as fair a chance to found a great power as can be given any man — ability, an iron will, a ready hand, a Pope for father, and marvellous good luck? But he is dead, an exile in Spain. Are not we Italians caught betwixt the French and Spanish millstones? If we keep our duchies and counties is it not by foreign sufferance? Does not His Holiness chafe daily at the insolent dictation of the foreign ambassadors? But art, learning, the love of the beautiful, the tongue of Cicero, and the tongue of Dante still are ours. And the Church is ours — the revenues drawn from frozen Norway and foggy England, from all Christendom, — still they come to Rome! And Rome having riches, wit, beauty, learning, has still her Empire. Therefore I would have you enter the Church. For I am ambitious for you, *caro mio*, very ambitious," — and again she kissed me.

"The good sisters who taught you at the convent of San Silvestro may well be proud of their pupil," I rejoined gratefully. "Greece boasted Sappho as the peeress of Homer in poetry. May not Italy then praise Marianna di Forli as rival to the ancient Cicero and the modern Piccolomini in the fair art of eloquence?"

Madonna shook her glorious head.

"Praise me, after you obey me. If you enter the Church, what a fair future! You are rich, the Pope proverbially poor. How you can win his favor! The red hat in a very few years, and then —" with a little laugh — "will not the Conclave prefer a gay young Pope to an old surly one? And who handsomer, wittier, more learned, better bred?" —

She did not finish, but flashed at me with her black eyes till my head fairly buzzed with fine notions. And yet her suggestion amused me mightily, and I replied:—

“I am glad you did not add, ‘and who more devout in life and conversation.’”

“Devout? You, Gualtiero? Oh, Santo Spirito, what a noble figure you would make arrayed as a black Dominican! You would even pass for a Master Inquisitor.”

“In which case I think I know a noble lady one could send to the rack for a thousand pagan heresies. Well—Rocca has just hinted your father will be Pope: may he have a long pontificate ere I succeed him. But less merrily, I sometimes wonder whither all this pleasant, gay life at His Holiness’s court is tending.”

“To a great fête on Corpus Christi day, I trust sincerely.”

“And something thereafter. Hear this, Madonna,—Italy is not quite all the world, though you may think it. What if we, with our Greek and Latin, our Plato and our Plotinus, have learned to laugh at much of the old theology, to think that San Marco and Æsop alike wrote very good fables? Believe me, beyond the Alps they still receive the old story of God and the saints as open-eyed peasants stand before a mountebank. And if some day your ‘doltish Germans’ (as you say) learn how His Holiness and the rest use these fables to filch money from their purses,—do you think the round bags of gulden will come to Rome quite so steadily as before?”

Marianna shrugged her shoulders gracefully.

“I don’t like your talk, Gualtiero. I only know that almost everybody who has advised keeping back the Pope’s dues has been burned, and that the last indulgence sale in Germany was profitable.”

“Excellent,” I assented; “still, suppose I do not prosper in the Church? My plans go wrong?”

"The dispensation to reënter the world is purchasable. You would still have your countships. We might even marry."

"Marriage is the death of true love, carissima," said I, my face close now to hers. And what more we might have done I know not, for at this instant our friends the Bishop of Montebello and the guards-captain Della Fabriano surprised us, evidently upon some errand. . . .

An excursion up the Tiber towards Primaporta was what they wanted us to join, and you may wager we did not decline on such a day. His Reverence of Montebello was accompanied by a charming Florentine lady whom he called his cousin: Fabriano was with a handsome, but somewhat dull lady of Ravenna whom he did not call his cousin. Both of the gentlemen had a lively wit, and there was enough bright dialogue amongst us to go into a stage-play. Whilst our six stout watermen stroked us along the yellow twisting stream we made Latin verses in praise of Fabriano's exploits upon the recent Urbino expedition: verses which Montebello swore were equal to Ovid's; and we attempted a few in Greek, although here none of the ladies could follow us save Marianna.

Oh! It was a day worth living, with the wind chasing down from the Apennines, and sending little cohorts of white clouds flying before the sun, and the soft, southern air, telling of Naples, Sicily, Greece, caressing us. On the shore sounded the notes of the shepherds piping to their sheep. Around our bow was the lapping music of the old, old river. Behind us, into a golden haze, faded the domes and campaniles of the undying city. If we had been Hellenes of Attica, like mad Alcibiades full of the pagan sparkle and glory, never could the "joy of life" have come more to us than it came upon that day.

And I think Marianna knew in part my thoughts, when

the general banter flagged a little, and we sat together listening to the water and the oars.

"Confess to me, Gualtiero," she broke softly in at last, "are you not glad your mother was an Italian?"

"I thank all Olympus and its gods."

"Yet you have visited your dreary north. Was it not very dreadful?"

"I went only as a young boy. What I recall is not unpleasant."

"Come tell me, *caro mio*; I have known you so long, yet you tell little enough of yourself. I know that you are rich, are a nobleman in your own right both in Italy and Germany. What is this German inheritance, Lich-ten-stein, and Re-gen-stein?" (She puckered her lips, pronouncing each syllable as if it hurt her.) "Where is it? When did your father get it?"

"A long story," I began listlessly, leaning back on the cushions and gazing more at Madonna's face than at the gliding river bank. "I have had no patience to learn it all. But the tale of my house is this. I am a Lichtenstein; and anywhere north of the Alps there is not a herald or pursuivant who will not tell you that many Dukes and Markgrafs have no better blood than ours. Well — the older line has kept the paternal principality near Austria. The younger line — whereof I am the chief — acquired by marriage a castle in the Harz, nigh to the centre of Germany — Regenstein. Therefore I am called the Graf von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein, or more briefly, in the speech of the country, the Graf von Regenstein."

"I understand. But what is Regenstein? A black rocky tower amid a desert?"

"By no means. I spent three years within it as a boy. I remember the great turrets, with their spirelike roofs; the gray stretches of impenetrable walls; the clouds of dusky

rooks above every pinnacle; huge halls where great fires roared, and shot out a ruddy glare upon the bearskin rugs and the antlers and array of spears upon the wall. The folk of the castle were gruff, unlike our sleek fellows here, all oiled and bowing, — but honest and kindly. Around the castle, to every side, stretched a deep wood such as is nowhere in Italy; sentinel beeches and ancient firs; and not far off ran a stream. In winter it was very cold. My father and his friends sat by the chimney place at their beer all day long, — save when the foresters reported a wild boar close to the castle —”

Madonna's hands went up in a playful kind of horror.

“Oh! To talk of your Regenstein, while we float here upon the beautiful river. Liefer would I fall amongst the man-eating savages the Spaniards say they are finding over seas, than spend a winter there!”

“I shall not compel you, *cara mia*,” I said, ardently.

“Blessed Mother! I trust not. Three years even as a boy in such a place — why were you not ruined? The boorish habits, — guzzling, gorging, and a boar hunt for interim! Doubtless not a book in the whole vast dungeon?”

“Old chaplain Jakob had a small library.”

“Of saints' lives and sham miracles, or else of outworn theology. Perhaps a tract by a Hussite heretic; but no Latin poet, not to name a Greek?”

“I fear not, Madonna.”

“Pity on you, my poor Gualtiero! How comes it you are such a tolerable cavalier, and speak good Italian and Latin?”

“You forget,” I said, smiling, “my mother was the Contessa di Palaestro. She died while I was a young boy, but her kinsfolk bred me up amidst the best afforded by Padua and Florence. Since my father's death, five years since, I have sought Rome — and you.”

She ignored this last, and pushed her interrogations.

"Nevertheless, although you speak as an Italian, dress as an Italian, are as gallant and learned as many an Italian, still you prefer to be called the lord of Re-gen-stein?"

"It was my father's wish. He found favor and fortune in Italy, even an Italian title through my mother, yet his heart was ever in the north. I know it was his dear wish that I should keep the old name, and even return to the old land, and spend my days chasing the wild doe over the slopes of the Brocken."

"Will you ever return to Germany, Gualtiero?" she asked, holding down her head.

"It is unlikely. Adolf, a bearish, loyal old martinet keeps the castle and forwards the rents from the peasants. You would rather visit me at Palaestro."

"Yes: in the hills above Perugia, and infinitely beautiful. We could hold a court there, as did the late Duke of Urbino. Poets, music, fêtes-of-love, theatricals, carnivals, — that would amuse us all the year long. How delightful!"

And then she smiled radiantly, and I knew she was about to press a petition.

"Gualtiero, I shall never be happy until I know you severed from your uncouth north forever. Sell Regenstein, — some fool will surely buy it. The Pisani bank at Venice is a safer place for your fortune; then, whether you enter the Church or not, I can think you are wholly ours."

"Impossible, Madonna; I must retain Regenstein, if only to honor my father's desire."

She was not pleased, but I persisted; yet I was not sorry when Montebello made the discussion general again by proposing a new attack at the old question, — how many angels (infinitely compressible) could dance upon the point of a needle (infinitely small). Upon this merry whetstone, we sharpened our wits right valiantly until the boat touched the shore near Primaporta. Here, under some noble ilexes,

the bishop's servants spread us a delightful collation, — everything choice, from the roasted thrushes to the cool Frascati. The luncheon ended, it was then time to pull back Romewards. . . .

I accompanied Marianna to the Forli palace near the Ponte San Angelo. The streets were crowded: five bandits had just been hanged by the police upon the bridge, and everybody had turned out to see the execution. The recent rains had left the ways very muddy, and pigs and goats were running loose among the people, who treated them with characteristic Roman indifference. The shadows were advancing; already numerous gay-robed cavaliers and ladies of the merrier sort, — all masked, were out for the evening pleasures, and mingling with the ubiquitous water vendors and the Swiss guards off duty. Our servants made us a path through the crowds, and we soon gained the palazzo. In the courtyard I found Forli, a little apart, taking leave of some elegantly clad personage, with a golden chain, a jewelled hilt, and a delicately trimmed little red beard. Thinking him a gentleman-in-waiting with whom I was acquainted, I drew near, but their conversation soon undeceived me.

"So you intend to fulfil my little commission promptly?" urged the cardinal.

The stranger pressed one hand upon his heart, while he swept the pavement with his black hat-feather in salutation.

"Your Magnificence — I have been overwhelmed with the honor of fulfilling your august desires. Is not my word given? Have I not sworn by the Holy Mother of Loretto? Eccellenza — you deal with a man of virtue and honor, who has but one and the same word for promise and performance."

"Then I may hope soon to hear of your dealings with Monsignore di B ——" with a glance lest the servants be within ear-shot.

"Eccellenza — to-night: to-morrow at the latest. I know the gentleman's haunts and habits. I pledge to your service the skill of Orosi, Ettore Orosi the valiant, the incomparable."

"Very good; you already understand your honorarium."

"I do, Eminenza: but in addition to the small gratification for myself which you named, you will, I am sure, have a due number of masses said for the soul of the unfortunate Monsignore. For as a Christian" — he crossed himself devoutly, — "I profess, I would not have his damnation upon my conscience. The more as the event does not admit his being rightly shriven."

"I pledge you they shall be most ample. I will even persuade the Holy Father to perform one in person. Therefore report quickly. Addio!"

Thus with a wave of the hand Forli sent the bravo out; then turned to me.

"Ecco! A most proper man: and stumbled on most promptly the very hour we wanted him. As for you, I trust that Marianna has laughed you out of your scruples."

"She has surely laughed enough at me. How convinced I am I dare not say. Enough that she has just promised to go with me to a late supper party at Messere Chigi's: and now I must hurry to my own palazzo in order to dress in a manner not to disgrace her."

"Donna Venus bless you, my children!" cried the good man; "how gay you are together. I feared I was about to have a stupid evening with my books, but His Holiness has summoned me to join him at his cards. Then perhaps, ere we go to bed, we can hear from Orosi."

Which surmise came true, though not as His Eminence expected.

CHAPTER III

THE FEAST AT THE VILLA FARNESINA

MY own chambers were on a quiet street near Messere Raffaello's lodgings at the Palazzo dei Convertendi. On the walk I had time to reflect that ere actually embracing a career in the Church I ought to write to my father's friend, the Senator Contarini of Venice, for his opinion as to my chances of advancement at the French court.

"Surely," I considered, "Marianna must realize that I cannot marry her if I am to seek a secular career. A cardinal's daughter is all very well, but she is not a countess; while if I become a churchman everything will go on as now, and my money will still be just as useful to her and to Forli. And why should I take holy orders just to humor them?" Amid such reflections I came to my palazzo.

Although Messere Chigi had invited us to "a very simple supper," I knew I ought not to ignore my toilet. All the world was aware that the Chigis were brothers to Croesus and Crassus, that their banks covered the Levant, that twenty thousand men manned their argosies, and that barring the Fuggers of Augsburg, no mortals had more ready money to lend to King or Pope. Accordingly, I let Andrea and my second and third valets dress me with some carefulness; and as I paused before the glass while Andrea gave me a finishing touch of civet, I told myself I would make a tolerable figure. My Milanese tailor had provided a gray suit which set my unimposing figure to good advantage, — with a

genteel fulness at the sleeves, and fashionable slashes at the hips. Fine French lace at my throat, a gold chain of curious carving, a couple of antique cameo rings, and some excellent Venetian chasing upon my silver hilt and scabbard, — these would make people say, “His Excellency the Conte knows how to dress.” My own face was too familiar for me to observe keenly, yet I remember thinking that with my black hair and mustache, I certainly passed for an Italian gentleman, not for the heir of as old a German house as could be found in the rolls of nobility at Vienna.

It had been dark for hours when I returned to the Forli palace to escort Marianna. We went with half a dozen stout fellows of the Cardinal, as well as four men of my own, for we had no wish to meet the surprise awaiting Monsignore di Bari. But despite two suspicious looking fellows lurking in the shadows by the Ponte Sisto, we had no adventures and came safely to the Villa Farnesina across the river whither Messere Chigi had invited us.

The now famous decorations in the hall — by Raffaello and his pupils — were not yet complete, but above our heads were already traced the graceful forms and elegant draperies of the myth of Psyche; and the master’s glorious Galatea in the antechamber I had long before admired. But I confess I had little interest in the paintings that night. After so many years, — so many scenes, grave and gay, flitting in between, — I recall this banquet, even as I recall my meeting with Marianna in the gardens, clearly, vividly. For was not this to be the last day and evening of my old life? My life as a child of the Southland, — careless, free, joyous, — obeying the law of fair fancy, with the harsh words “duty” and “conscience” very far away. I have learned to view life differently, yet well do I recall it all!

Messere Chigi had surpassed himself. He greeted us with his wonted courtly grace.

At his side was his beautiful friend, Francesca Andreozza, whom, the year following, he was to marry. Her diamonds, I swear, were better than those of the Queen of England. Raffaello was there and his delightful Fornarina. Signor Bembo, the Pontifical Secretary, and arbiter of correct Latin and Italian poetry, had come with his pleasant companion, Donna Morosina; but I will not name all the cardinals and their escorts, nor the Roman gentlemen,—Orsinis, Contis, Colonnas, Ludovisis, Rospigliosis; and the rest. In short, there were more than forty covers laid, and for elegance of manner and brilliancy of conversation a more notable company could not have been found in Rome. The guests then were worthy of Messere Chigi's best, which "best" implied a feast such as an Apicius might have laid for an emperor.

The hall was cooled by great fans fixed overhead and worked by invisible hands; in the centre rose a column whereon a beautiful boy, stripped, and gilded like a statue, stood pouring water from a silver urn. The scores of servants passing with silent feet were clad in Eastern silks. The seneschal in charge changed his gorgeous dress four times during the banquet. Rose water was brought for our hands. Many of the dishes were triumphs of art—statuary rather than confectionery. Perseus was shown saving Andromeda, and Ceres came in her chariot drawn by five tigers. There was a sturgeon five feet long upon one silver dish, and a stag served whole. The very bread was gilded. Yet with it all there was no burden in the magnificence. Messere Chigi had all his guests at their ease, and I soon found myself separated from Marianna, who sat opposite with Rocca, while my companion chanced to be the vivacious Contessa della Valle, with the learned Master "Censor" Priario close at hand.

I forget all that we talked about during the innumerable courses, but I recall that when some luscious pheasants were served, the Contessa shrugged her shoulders.

"After all," smiled she, "it is not yet midnight and to-day was Friday."

"All things are permitted in Rome," I replied lightly. "How is that, my wise Priario?"

"Excellently said," returned the censor, lifting a choice morsel. "Says not Scripture, 'The Kings of the Earth take tribute of strangers, but the Children (ourselves, of course), are free.'"

"Full pardon, then!" cried the Contessa, who had taken enough wine to be a little gay. She helped herself, and I was complimenting her upon some fine corals, when Cardinale di Porto, near by, asked if I had read Pomponazzi of Mantua's new essay upon "The Immortality of the Soul."

"Yes, I have read it," I assented; "but I cannot claim to judge it as an expert churchman."

"Yet you have an opinion?"

"If I were a theologian, I should say the learned author has the incredulity of Lucretius and the infidelity of a Moslem."

"Too harsh, my dear Conte. It is a most excellent book. The author declares clearly he submits to the Church in all its teachings, even if the immortality of the soul is disproved by all human reasoning."

"Nevertheless," I contended, "for much lesser heresies better men have walked to the stake."

"The stake! Don't mention the horrid word, Eccellenza," begged the lady nervously.

"Nevertheless," I rejoined, "the book is so dangerous and heretical that its sale is forbidden in Venice."

"Of course," retorted Porto, "your Venetian is ultra-orthodox; praised be the immortals, His Holiness is more liberal!"

"I fear he would not prove so liberal," I ventured, "if instead of writing for a few philosophers, Pomponazzi had declared to the multitude that 'since it is doubtful whether we

have immortal souls, it is also doubtful whether we ought to pay tithes to Rome.' ”

“There is no parallel !” cried the lady.

“The Contessa is right,” chimed Porto. “It is quite a different matter to advance a cautious theory for the learned few, than to cast pearls before swine, — I mean to cast sage conclusions before the ignorant.”

“We will deal with your second case when it arises,” thrust in Priario grimly, but at this moment the discussion was widened by a question I heard the learned Messere Bembo putting, a little way down the table.

“And tell me, my dear Chigi, how the last indulgence in Germany sells? Will it not relieve His Holiness’s financial troubles?”

“The sale has hardly begun,” returned the banker; “but since the Archbishop of Mainz has taken it over, it seems likely to prosper tolerably. The appeal to ‘build St. Peter’s Church’ opens purse strings. Then I hear that some admirably clever preachers have been hired to do the hawking.”

“Clever?” queried Bembo, looking up from his goblet. “It cannot need great cleverness to bewitch the money from the pouches of those ‘Barbarians,’ as the great Magister Gustiniani called them.”

“Yet you wrong our Northern friends,” said Chigi lightly. “True they have more fleas than Latin words, more beer than good wine; and yet they have a hearty rude civility and a learning after the old pious sort. I have been in Nuremberg. I avow it was a passably handsome city.”

“Impossible !” challenged the savant. “What good can come from such a land of the frozen Hyperboræ? as Plato most irrefutably says in the ninth chapter of the *Timeaus*—”

“We do not all understand Greek,” said Chigi deprecatingly. Perhaps he saw that my face was growing red, and that others were looking at me. “In my day I have seen many

men of many countries. Believe me, even a blackamoor improves on acquaintance. The French have a good proverb, 'The absent are always wrong.'

But the secretary arose in the dogmatic pride of a complacent pedant.

"I have seen the brutes. I have learned to despise them. The French are tolerable, but the Germans —" a gesture completed his disgust. "Their best Latinist, Erasmus — who is he but a mere schoolboy still conning his Donatus's grammar?"

I was on my feet; Chigi beckoned for silence, but Bembo swept on.

"No thanks to Julius Cæsar, I assert, for bringing this disgusting North by his conquests within reach of our civilization. Let them freeze and moulder in their bogs! If their present credulity, 'the sins of the Germans' as we say, is profitable to Rome, — whether to build St. Peter's or to pay His Holiness's debts — 'tis but the just tribute of vice to virtue, of ignorance to learning. I tell you, Chigi, neither you nor another can name a German or a son of a German who was a tolerable scholar, and by habits a virtuoso and a gentleman."

The savant paused for breath. I attacked instantly. I spoke in my best Latin, choosing each word carefully. The wine had only made my senses more acute. I could see Marianna signalling to me "caution," but my fighting spirit was roused.

"Magister Bembo," I began, "do me the honor to hearken. I tell you that I am the son of a German nobleman, as honorable and perfect a cavalier as ever drew a sword; and I will not have my father's nation slandered to my face. If I have spent most of my life in my mother's Southland, it is not through shame for my father's North. Nobility and learning, and ripe wisdom there are in the North, — things which

it ill becomes you men of erudition to deny. Honesty, kindness and loyalty there are in the North—things which you of Italy might learn right well. And if the Germans still believe heartily divers matters of religion, which you of Italy pretend to believe, and scoff at in private,—the greater glory theirs, the greater shame for you!”

Bembo was red now, and it was not from wine; but I would not cease in order to let him speak. My own anger was kindling. I was precisely in the mood for plain truths and cutting words.

“Let us be frank, noble friends! You know that this Christian religion which is so often on our tongues is to us as great a legend as that of Isis and Osiris of Egypt. If we acknowledge a deity is He not in reality the God of Plato, not of Moses and the Nazarene? Are not our master-philosophers and teachers from Athens, not from Jerusalem? Our wise Bembo, I understand, has lately warned his students against reading St. Paul because of his bad Greek. Rather let us tell the world to withdraw from the teachings of Matthew and Luke because they are but fair fables. Let us not depose His Holiness—avert it, Gods!—let us rather proclaim him the leader, the arch-hierophant of ourselves the emancipated, the lovers of the beautiful, of the eternal verities which we grasp, not through blind Jewish tradition, but through exalted reason. Then—*then* we can taunt the Germans for their credulity, when we have ceased to take their money, and ceased to profess to believe a lie.”

I had silenced Bembo. That triumph at least was mine. Stunned by my audacity, no one for a long moment either laughed or applauded. Then I saw a lady—in scared fashion—crossing herself. Several of the older cardinals were trying hard to look horrified. Then came a little ripple of voices, half-deriding, half-approving, if not my sentiments, at least my boldness. I stood for a moment with the hot flush

on my cheeks, my heart prompting me to say more; but Marianna's upraised finger commanded silence, and Chigi with ready wit answered for the writhing Bembo.

"Monsignore the Secretary, I am sure, spoke in haste and without intent to insult the ancestors or fatherland of so illustrious a gentleman as the Conte di Palaestro. As for the latter's answer, let us all confess it was not unprovoked. In the heat of such a sortie no man can be required to weigh all he utters. The Conte would hardly subscribe to-morrow to all he has expressed to-night. Heaven forbid, we should either undervalue or overrate his words! Being no learned classicist, as are these highly esteemed gentlemen, I cry their pardon if I beg them to forego this discussion before this most noble and virtuous company."

I had shot my arrow, and readily bowed assent. Bembo muttered something about "having no desire to wound the Conte's honor." Monsignore Priario and a couple of other ecclesiastics looked at me rather blackly, but I felt none the worse for that. The conversation became general, everybody steering clear of dangerous subjects. The Prince of Colonna explained the latest discoveries of the Spaniards in the Indies and the possibility of a great increase in the supply of gold. Raffaello spoke charmingly about his latest project for the reconstruction of San Pietro. Bembo — quite mollified — told of the rediscovery of a manuscript of Plautus at the Milanese library, while Rocca aired his ingenious theory of how the ancient gourmands served oysters. The night, or rather the morning, advanced. The candles were changed; more wine was passed — although nobody was drinking really to excess. We were so charmed by our own wit that no one noted the hour when we dismissed the subject of the Laocoön, lately installed in the Vatican Belvidere, and took up the theory of Pindar, as propounded by the Bishop of Montebello, — "that a noble action is worthless to the doer,

unless it is accompanied by the praise of his fellow-men." On this point we all, — including the ladies, — had much to say, and I was being charmed by the manner wherewith Madonna Marianna entered into the argument, when I was diverted by the touch of a servant.

"Many pardons, Eccellenza ; this gentleman says he must speak to you."

Looking about I saw the guards-captain, Fabriano, our companion on the boat ride, and leaped up immediately.

"Happily met, good fellow," I cried, holding out my hand ; "the wine has loosed our tongues and unsealed our wit and wisdom. Here, boy — a chair and a glass for the noble captain."

He did not take my hand, and gazed at me awkwardly.

"Pest take me, Gualtiero," he began at last ; "I scarce know what to say. I have come here as an official, not as a friend. Be sure I come with all the reluctance in the world."

"But my dear fellow, I don't see why you look at me as gingerly as San Giorgio at his dragon."

He seized me by the sleeve, then blurted,

"The fiends make me out with it ! I am come to demand your sword and take you to the Castle of San Angelo. The governor of the city has ordered it."

"To arrest me ? —" I was indeed dazed.

"Come quietly — at least away from here," he urged ; "I will explain —"

But here the Contessa della Valle, who had listened like a cat to everything, gave a little shriek.

"Arrested ! Conte di Palaestro arrested ! To San Angelo ? Oh ! impossible —"

The babel of conversation ceased instantly, and Chigi interposed without delay.

"You arrest the Conte, Fabriano ? My guest ? Monstrous ! Incredible ! An outrageous intrusion : explain !"

"Most noble banker," returned the Captain, very ill at ease, "be assured I undertook this disagreeable task only that another less delicate officer might not perform it. I grieve to inform you that the Conte is charged with attempting to procure the murder of the Archbishop of Bari —"

"Murder Monsignore di Bari?" came as one cry from all over the room.

"Calm yourselves, illustrious ladies and gentlemen. The Archbishop is unharmed. Nevertheless, I must execute my orders."

"At least," spoke Chigi peremptorily, "you are to satisfy us that this charge is not a mere fiction, some ill-timed jest, aimed at the Conte di Palaestro?"

As I glanced towards Marianna and Rocca I could see them both flushed, disturbed and whispering excitedly one with the other. Then Madonna caught my eye and laid her hand upon her lips. There was dead silence whilst all craned and listened to Fabriano's answer.

"Noble friends — believe me I did not announce this thing touching his Excellency the Conte as something proved, but only alleged. The known facts are these. This evening the Archbishop left his apartments near the Pantheon to keep an appointment with a lady in a garden near the Colosseum. He had had affairs with braves lately, and as precaution wore a ring shirt of proof. Luckily, too, he was followed by several trusty valets, among whom were two old soldiers from the Milanese wars. Passing a narrow street by San Pietro in Vincoli several men were observed following. Bari proceeded and the fellows disappeared; but when near their destination, on turning a convent wall, suddenly, three men ran out against them with drawn swords. The leader sprang on Bari and would infallibly have pierced him, but his sword was snapped on the ring mail. The recoil of the unfortunate stroke threw the murderer off his balance. He

fell, and instantly his comrades fled into the darkness. Bari's servants flung themselves upon the prostrate bravo and secured him. The Archbishop, finding himself unhurt, at once caused his people to conduct the prisoner to the Governor of Rome at San Angelo. The captive was promptly recognized as the desperate and notorious Ettore Orosi. Knowing that such a man only attempted murders for a price, he was at once confronted with the rack, to secure the name of his employer. After a certain hesitancy, he gave way before the threats, and presently mentioned our illustrious Conte; yet told his story with such plausibility that the Governor could only yield to the hot demands of Bari and direct me to summon the Conte to San Angelo."

This somewhat long recital had given me time to recover my wits, and I divined quickly the signals cast me by Marianna and Rocca. I drew myself up a little haughtily.

"Worthy Fabriano," I said, "I exonerate you in this strange affair, but as an immediate and noble vassal of the Holy See, I deny the right of the Governor of San Angelo to hale me before him on the witness of a professional bravo. Let me be taken not to San Angelo but to the Vatican; let me be examined at once by the Pope himself."

"Impossible," Fabriano began to object; "the lateness of the hour, my clear orders —"

But Rocca stepped forward. "I will take it upon myself to shield you from all consequences. Let the Conte be conducted instantly to His Holiness."

"If the Cardinale di Rocca pledges," bowed the captain, yielding; and so the matter was concluded. I could see well enough how Rocca was anxious for himself, and Marianna for her father in the business, and vastly preferred the sifting of the approachable Pope, rather than of the stern-browed Governor. As for myself, I was resolved to shield Forli and Rocca if I could, without putting my own affairs

in too much jeopardy. Plainly Orosi had tried to screen his real employer by accusing me, and my wishes for the renowned bravo were not the kindest.

The feast broke up as I was led out. I pitied Messere Chigi. What an unlucky ending for a most carefully planned supper — and how all the tongues in Rome would wag in the morning !

CHAPTER IV

THE JUDGMENT OF LEO DE' MEDICI

THE captain had a closed carriage ready, and did not do me the indignity of taking away my sword. Marianna and Rocca had gone out simultaneously, and started ahead in one of Chigi's vehicles, hastily harnessed. A messenger was sent to San Angelo to summon Bari to the Vatican, and ask that Orosi be sent thither under due guard. My custodian, an excellent-hearted cavalier, spent most of the ride across the now dark and silent city, assuring me that there was nothing to fear, that the charges of Orosi were absurd, and that the Pope was all benignity in every case where his kinsfolk did not interfere to arouse him. I, however, knowing the plot better, foresaw trouble in clearing myself without implicating Forli, especially as the bravo would doubtless say anything to save his neck. Nevertheless, I took a certain grim satisfaction in realizing that Forli's unsavory plot was thwarted.

"No," I asserted to myself, almost aloud, "I do not think that I will soon be forced to become the Archbishop of Bari!"

So we went on, till the wheels rolled into the court of the Vatican. A few torches made the great pile of buildings rise darkly above us. A subaltern of the Swiss guards threw open the door. I descended with the captain. Rocca was there already, having put his horses at their speed, and at a signal from him my custodian conducted me up the long staircases, and along the half-lighted galleries, until we came to a line of yawning gentlemen-chamberlains and flunkies

outside the private apartments of His Holiness; and after some delay Messere Paris di Grassis, the Master of Ceremonies, and two other green-cassocked ushers, came forward to demand our wishes.

I let Rocca do the negotiating. The worthy Paris's protests against disturbing the Pope were presently beaten down; but before we were admitted another group had joined us, — my accuser, Bari, in civilian's dress, and still flushed and excited, besides a squad of soldiers with the valiant Orosi pinioned in their midst. The Archbishop's smooth, olive face darkened ominously when he glanced at me, but Fabriano clapped a kindly hand on my shoulder, and we exchanged no defiances. Then with a little rumble the doors were thrown open, and Monsignore Paris was calling:—

“You may enter, Signori.”

The scene was not unfamiliar. The high, brilliantly frescoed room was lighted by a score of lamps swinging from silver chains, a dozen prelates and court gentlemen were lounging on divans around the chamber, and conversing in polite whispers. In the centre of the room was a round table covered with white velvet, about which were three low chairs occupied by Forli and two other cardinals. On the table lay cards and a goodly pile of golden scudi. Directly facing the door, upon a high armchair, sat Leo de' Medici.

“His Eminence of Rocca, Monsignore di Bari and the Conte di Palaestro,” announced Paris's clear voice, “crave audience with His Holiness upon a matter admitting no delay.”

We entered in a little group and stood in respectful attention until the Pope — disturbed in the dealing of a new game of his favorite *primiera* — could recover from his slight surprise. The Maltese poodle at his knee rose, begging and barking for one of the bonbons on the stand at his lord's elbow. The Pope stared at us, his near-sighted, glassy eyes starting prominently out of his large, florid face. His light

hair was covered by a white skullcap, and from under his red stole peeped the scarlet slippers with the golden cross on the right foot. It took a minute for him to fidget his thick body in the arm-chair, reach with his much beringed hand a dainty to the dog, and fumble for his eyeglass. He surveyed us briefly, and at last in his usual brisk and pleasant manner began:—

“Well met, well met — Rocca, Bari, Palaestro. Good hands all of you! I am sure these noble cardinals here will be glad to have you replace them, especially as I seem to have won most of their money. And how have you spent the evening? I hear Chigi gave one of his charming suppers. I trust the ladies’ toilets were elegant.”

He paused to cast another bonbon to the dog.

“May your Holiness be graciously pleased,” began Rocca in a constrained tone. “I fear we cannot usurp their Eminences’ places at your table. A little difference has arisen between Monsignore di Bari and the Conte di Palaestro which only your Holiness can arbitrate.”

“A difference, — excellent!” the Pope’s eyes brightened. “Some matter of Latin versification, no doubt. I heard yesterday that Bari was preparing some excellent pentameters.”

“I grieve to say, your Holiness,” spoke the Archbishop, abruptly, “our ‘differences’ touch quite another business. The illustrious Conte di Palaestro has hired this bravo Orosi here to take my life, and but for my good mail shirt, I would have been dead these three hours!”

“Murder? Hired bravoos?” the Pope’s thick features paled at the words of ill-omen. “Impossible! Why, man — all Rome knows the Conte’s worthy German scruples. Impossible, I say!”

“I can convince your Holiness,” asseverated Bari. “The Pope surely knows this Orosi’s reputation. The Governor of San Angelo can be witness both to his identity and his char-

acter. He was caught red-handed in the deed, and has confessed. As a prelate of the Church, if not as your friend, I demand your Holiness's punishment upon his hirer, the Conte di Palaestro."

"Pest take the business!" cried the Pope, casting his cards upon the table. "Was ever a quiet evening so spoiled? Well — Gualtiero, why don't you speak? What have you to say?"

"I say," I rejoined brusquely, "that the Pope knows me long enough to make this monstrous charge fall of its own weight. I did not hire this bravo to murder Monsignore di Bari."

"Bear witness, your Holiness," cried the Archbishop, triumphantly; "he does not deny, however, knowing of a plot to take my life."

"Come, come," exclaimed Leo, half testily; "let us not act like hasty schoolboys. Since you are safe and sound, Bari, don't grow vindictive. We will sift the whole business; first let us examine the assassin."

During all this dialogue Forli and Rocca had been whispering, and now Forli came to my elbow.

"A good heart, Gualtiero!" he shot in my ear; "do not betray me. All will end well."

"But better never begun," I darted back. Now, however, the Pope began to interrogate the prisoner, and all our attention was concentrated upon Orosi.

To do the bravo credit he stuck to his lie with admirable dexterity. Clearly enough he understood that Forli's gratitude for his perverted tale would far offset any anger of mine. He swore circumstantially that I had summoned him to an interview that afternoon, had represented that Bari was crossing me in the matter of a lady; and then we had arranged for the Archbishop's removal. He named places, persons, and times with inimitable plausibility. The exalted

rank of his questioner disturbed him not the least. When asked as to his experience in such matters, he looked upon Bari with capital nonchalance, and avowed that "he had helped eleven better than Monsignore into purgatory, — praised be Santo Paolo! — for had he not learned his art in the school of *il illustrissimo* Cesare Borgia?"

When all direct attempts to shake his story had failed, the Pope turned on me.

"And now your denial, Conte?"

"As before. I swear I did not employ this cut-throat. His story is a tissue of lies."

"He said you talked with him at your lodgings before you left for Chigi's. If you did not, who were with you at that time, to substantiate your denial?"

"I will not deceive your Holiness, only my own servants."

"And where were you before that?"

"At the palazzo of the Cardinale di Forli."

"And who was there?"

I felt the flush mount to my temples. I never cursed my German blood as I cursed it then. Why did my tongue trip at a well-placed lie? I knew my reputation for blunt Northern veracity. Why dared I not trade on it?

"Madonna Marianna, of course," I answered, sparring for time.

"Naturally; and the Forli servants, and some of your own, perhaps. Who else?"

"I do not recollect. I was not there long."

But the words did not come boldly; and simultaneously I saw Bari's keen face flash from me to Forli, then back with a sudden gleam of intelligence.

"I demand a better answer, your Holiness," he thrust in. "The Conte is not making a full answer. He *does* recollect. Command that he declare upon his honor whom he saw at that palazzo."

"Can you answer the Archbishop?" said the Pope, with unwonted firmness. He was a shrewd judge of men when once aroused.

I looked His Holiness fairly in the eye.

"I regret to pique Monsignore's curiosity," I said, "but I cannot reply to his question."

You could have counted twelve ere any in the company spoke a word. They had all pressed near to catch my disclosure. Not one could miss the point of the question and answer. Forli was looking downward sheepishly. I knew he was execrating my hesitancy to prevaricate. Then the Pope began again — ominously gentle.

"I trust you appreciate the unfortunate results of withholding anything. If you cannot swear you saw no stranger at the Cardinal's, whom did you see? Describe as precisely as possible if you cannot identify him."

I glanced furiously at Rocca and Forli. I was more angry at their involving me in their fell project, than fearful of its consequences.

"Your Holiness, I regret it, but my answer is final. I can say nothing as to anything that occurred at the palazzo of the Cardinal."

Bari — an irascible man — threw down his biretta in the Pope's presence.

"I call your Holiness to witness! To-night my life was attempted. By the confession of the assassin the Conte was his employer. The Conte's denial is most imperfect. By plain implications from his silences it is likely others were in the plot. I know well certain high personages," — he darted a glance upon Forli and Rocca, "have envied the favor awarded me by your Holiness, and coveted the prebends and benefices you have deigned to bestow upon me. If the Pope is not a lord merely over bravoës and bandits, I demand —"

But Forli had already whispered to a fellow-cardinal, and

he to the Master of Ceremonies. Now good Messere Paris stepped forward with uplifted hand.

"May it please the Pope! The very reverend Archbishop is about, I fear, to say many harsh things, calculated — if bruited through Rome, to spread even through Christendom, to the great scandal of the Church. He is saved. *Laus Deo!* The bravo is taken. *Laus Deo in excelsis!* But this being the case I pray your Holiness to act delicately in opening a matter in which more may be involved than the mere avenging of Monsignore."

"Well said," uttered an influential cardinal, in audible whisper.

"Yet I," asserted Bari, "have been all but murdered. I insist —"

"*Pax!*" ordered the Pope, moving uneasily on his cushions. "Was ever there a less happy case! Bari must be vindicated? Right. The Church must be spared a scandal? Right. But how do both. Have I Solon, Periander, Thales and all the other Seven Sages in my council? How could you do this, Forli? how could you?" The cardinal addressed tried hard not to seem to comprehend. "What lack of judgment? What lack of consideration for me? And now you have involved our unfortunate Gualtiero" —

The Holy Father took refuge in a new demand by the poodle to be fed, and stopped to satisfy the dog.

"At least," urged Bari, his eyes like daggers, "there is no scandal to the Church in the case of the gallant Conte, — to all intents my murderer. Let *him* pay out his penalty."

But I had now measured the situation, and broke my silence.

"Hear me, your Holiness. It is true I am so unluckily situated that to refute this bravo's story I must involve others whom I would, as an honorable friend, fain spare. I will not whine abjectly for leniency: but I will remind the

Pope of the day when not the Holy Father, but the then Cardinale de' Medici, was banished from Florence, was driven with insults from Bologna, but found refuge and true friendship at my grandfather's castle at Palaestro."

"I remember," muttered the Pope, "I remember."

"Then I entreat your Holiness, in whatever you decide to recall this service in dealing with your protector's grandson."

Bari would have charged in again, but Leo forbade him with a gesture. A minute of tense silence, and then the Pope's face relaxed. I knew that he had reached a relatively merciful decision. He cleared his throat.

"A sad business, Gualtiero; a sad business, Forli. Very bunglingly managed as I think I see through it. Not that I applaud the attack on poor Bari, — Jove forbid! — but then there can be a certain finesse even in great crimes. This Orosi is not nearly as redoubtable a villain as he boasts — to that I'll swear. Well, — what's to be done? A pity surely to have Bari in such jeopardy and no reparation. I must mollify him. A good prebend at Orvieto fell vacant last week. You have applied for it, Forli: but you must withdraw your petition now. It shall go to Bari — eleven hundred ducats income. A fair salve for that sword thrust — eh?" The Pope's eyes gleamed, and the Archbishop looked decidedly appeased. "I'll not press Rocca whether *he* knows anything of this business, though mayhap he ought to share the penalty with Forli. And now as to this bravo — a sturdy rascal, a very sturdy rascal! What a pity not in a more honest calling! And yet he were better hanged."

"I cry your Holiness' mercy," began Orosi, dropping deftly on his knees, and squeezing the drops out of his eyes. "I swear by the Mother of God and all Angels that I have resolved, if spared this once, to devote all my days to the war against the Turkish infidels. Peccavi! Peccavi! The compassion of your Holiness is known to all the world."

"Tush!" commanded the Pope, almost laughing now. "Rise up! Do you think I'll spare you for vows like that? I was only wondering whether you would prove useful to my kinsmen in Florence."

"Ah, yes! yes! Holiness. There is much that a man of my ability can do in Florence. I will be faithful forever. My gratitude" —

"Stand him aside," ordered Leo; "at least he needn't hang to-night." And then he fixed his eyes on me.

"So you are left, Gualtiero? Let me see. Did the company at Chigi's hear the whole story, the bravo's accusation and all the rest?"

"The greater part, your Holiness," said Fabriano.

"*Misericordia!* It will be all over Rome then in the morning. If it had only first come to me privately! Surely you see that I can't pardon you now. What an unlucky position! And you desire to make no defence? Well — how can I seem to temper justice with mercy, and yet punish you? I believe you have a castle and estates in Germany?"

I bowed assent.

"Then it will not be so bad. Naturally you wish to visit them ere very long. Why not at present? We shall miss you here, Gualtiero — miss you at cards and at the hunt, but *Deo volente* not forever. Your Germans are a credulous folk, but I have travelled among them. They are not so vile as many of us suppose. So, then, my decision. Give ear." His tone grew formal. "Seeing that the Conte di Palaestro has been unable to clear himself of prompting an attempt upon the Archbishop of Bari, I do declare that he has laid himself liable to the penalties of a great crime: but in the paternal mercy, never failing to the Holy See, and lest the full uncovering of the crime breed a great scandal in the Church, I do remit the major part of the punishment, and command that he depart to-morrow for his German estates, giving his

word not to reënter Italy for one year, nor to return to Rome for two years."

"Your Holiness is very indulgent," I said humbly. The Pope thrust out his right slipper upon the footstool. I knelt and kissed the shoe, and then bowed myself out into the antechamber. The card players dispersed. A little group was gathering around Bari to congratulate him upon his new prebend.

"Lucky fellow," Rocca was saying in my ear. "How loath the Pope was to do anything to you! With his chronic need for money he might have fined you fifty thousand scudi."

Forli, too, had like felicitations over the merciful outcome, but I answered both coldly. "I owe you no thanks, Eminenzas. This has been your plot, but my penalty. I warned in advance against your scheme. But for that sense of honor which you so little cultivate, and which you would never have exercised in my behalf, I could have passed the debt on to you, and gone scot free."

"We are grateful, Gualtiero, we are grateful," Forli kept repeating. "Orosi did his work perfectly. No one is really to blame. But, *Di Immortales!* who could have dreamed that dolt of a Bari had wit enough to wear a chain shirt!"

* * * * *

A little later, in the gray dawn, before I left the Vatican, I stood alone for a little while with Marianna. I will not tell how she wept, accused herself and her father a thousand times for the "blunder," or how I vowed to carry her miniature ever with me and to write from Padua and Augsburg, and again as soon as I reached my castle of Regenstein.

"I will think of you always, always!" she kept declaring.

"You will soon have other lovers, Madonna," I said with sad truthfulness.

"Never such a one as you, Gualtiero. Never such a one as

you! I will never forget you. And who knows but that I may come even into your frozen North in search of you? For remember my saying: you are Italian, never German. You belong to the South, to us forever!"

"Nevertheless," I answered, "at present I fare toward the Northland."

Then I told her that after all we were both young, and this was only a passing cloud across the long summer of life before us, and that after a year I could at least receive her at Palaestro. I need not repeat all that we said and did at the parting.

And so ended my last night in Rome, not for two, but for more than three, years.

BOOK I

THE AWAKENING

CHAPTER V

I COME TO SCHLOSS REGENSTEIN

THE copy of a letter written soon after my arrival in Germany to my old friend and correspondent, Rocca, tells at least what I wished my associates at Rome to know of my journey and its surroundings. It is couched in the style much affected by the virtuosi of the day; and although I have come to be ashamed enough of such literary vanities, I allow the letter to stand that it may be a true chronicle of at least one person — myself.

“ . . . Pardon indeed, my honored Rocca, that I now write you in mere Italian, and not in Latin. But my books have not yet arrived from Augsburg, and while it is indeed possible I could write in the classic tongue without the immortal illustrations of pure Latinity before me, I fear I might lapse into some monkish idiom unless I could refer to my Cicero and Statius. However, I do not intend to imitate Agrippina and Trajan (not to name Cæsar) and recite my deeds in formal commentaries, but simply to declare that your friend is in good health, and so far as a banished man may be, in good spirits.

“ Here I am, then, in my mountain eyrie, snug as an eagle above intruding ken. Conceive me too as sovereign lord over

all human creatures about me, possessed of right of pit and gallows, and expected to prove my princely blood by administering frequent floggings with my own hand, and accounted not a little lacking in spirit if I fail to crowd my overlarge dungeons with many victims of my capricious displeasure. In short, within my little kingdom I find that I am possessed of all the absolute tyranny of the Grand Turk or the Great Prince of Muscovy.

"The tale of my journey over the Alps to Augsburg and Erfurt, I must omit, knowing you have had your surfeit of stories of travellers. I will simply remark that the inns had even as many hungry fleas as I had feared (excelling even their ferocious comrades of Naples), the cookery was bad, the folk we met, even of the better sort, were oafish: and Andrea and his underlings have had their heads repeatedly broken (and have retorted in kind) in brawls with sheep-pated inn-servants. Indeed, when I look on my poor Andrea and observe his hang-dog countenance as he goes among these Northerners, I feel that for him the expiation of his sins in purgatory has begun already.

"Shortly after leaving Erfurt we had our first real adventure. We ran upon a band of armed villains led by a fellow styled a 'Ritter' (*i.e.* with some pretence to coat-armor) in the act and article of rifling the wagons of certain Halle merchants who were sadly watching the plundering with their arms strapped behind them. Modesty forbids me to tell of my own feats in combat; nevertheless, Andrea afterward proclaimed that I laid about me like a veritable Orlando. In any case, we dispersed the rascals, rescued the merchants, and I pinked the Ritter through the shoulder. Afterwards when we trussed him up to carry onward to Nordhausen and to summary justice, the fellow professed no sorrow for his misdeeds, but asserted his rights to plunder along that highway. 'From time immemorial his family had possessed

the right to plunder every cart which broke its axle upon the road betwixt certain limits, and assuredly *that* cart had so broken its axle. Besides, every Ritter now and then made his horse "bite off the purses of travellers."

"All this gave me a taste of the country I was entering. From Nordhausen, as I fared northward, the country became ever more wild and rocky. Not sublime like the Alps; not softly sensuous like the south of our dear Italy; but one green hill after another, each a little higher, each a little steeper than its predecessor, until at last you wind in and out the mountains, following the line of some green rushing brook, while high above, the great ridges of pointed pines rise line upon line, like the spear points of a serried army.

"So we plunged into the Harz, over hill and dale, past castles and brown-thatched hamlets. Sometimes a red-roofed village, with its peaked parish spire would loom before us; sometimes a little chapel upon a soaring crag. The country folk were haler and brawnier than the lowlanders we were quitting. We met a great flock of black sheep, with a grizzled, blue-coated shepherd, filling all the roadway and crowding us nigh across the wall. We passed five ox-teams pulling great creaking loads of hay, so high that the latter seemed to dwarf both the double yoke and the sturdy driver who was guiding the whole vast mass with a deft touch of his goad. Again there was the melodious tinkling of fifty cow-bells, as the long herd came plodding down the pine-hung way.

"And as we wound deeper into the mountains, past one red-roofed village after another, and saw the sturdy forms of the men, straight as the firs above them; saw the blond, clear beauty of the farmer maids, with their long, fair hair wound round their heads like shining wreaths, I confess the blood began to stir within me, and despite the remembrance

of Rome and Florence and Venice and the rest, I began to find the upland air all spring and sparkle, and to think the German speech less harsh; yes, even to say under-breath, 'I will never mourn that my father sprang from this North.'

"After we passed Hasselfelde and entered upon the last stage of the journey, the country grew yet wilder. Over a clearing we saw the red coat of a startled deer go flashing through the pine stumps. A wolfish wood-cutter stopped and looked at us hard as we approached, as if wondering whether he had not best scamper up the hillside out of reach of our arquebuses. We crossed a roaring torrent by a rough timber bridge that swayed uncannily under our horses. Then at a sudden turn in the rocks we came face to face with half a score of men on big lumbering steeds, and clad in black and very nondescript armor. They bore halberds big enough to fell oxen, and Andrea — our vanguard, — had his firelock ready in a trice, ere I could call out 'hold!' But the foremost rider, a mighty man, too big for his tall roan horse, came straight on, and his grizzled mustaches, his wolf-white teeth, and the long scar over his forehead, I remembered from boyhood days right well.

"'Adolf!' I cried.

"By some magic instantly the whole band reined in, and the ten giants leaping down with direful clatter began to bend and scrape.

"'Your Countly Grace! Your Countly Grace!' they all chanted together, and Adolf then begun to shuffle up to me, seizing my hand, kissing it in a slobbering way. Next he must needs tell in harshest mountain German, how he had always sworn that I would come back like a Regensteiner to the old schloss; that he had received my advance messenger; that he had kept the schloss true and fast even as my fathers had loved it; that there was a great boar in the Tannenwald waiting my hunting; that the dogs were

in excellent fettle; that he had in the dungeon two poachers whom he was sure I would enjoy hanging, or perhaps I preferred breaking them on the wheel; and that —

“But here I shook off his bearlike embraces, and in what German I had, I thanked him for his faithfulness, assured him and his followers that I would try by my gratitude to merit their loyalty, and that I would be delighted with their escort onward to Schloss Regenstein. So then we rode forward, Andrea still casting one anxious eye upon our new companions and the other upon his well-primed arquebuse.

“How we passed the town of Blankenburg I quite forgot, and indeed I thought of little save that I was returning to the castle of my father’s fathers. I knew that Adolph and his company were taking mental account of their new lord; of his Milanese hosiery, his Florentine mantle, his Venice corselet, and his Bologna bonnet. More quizzical, too, I knew they were of my smooth chin and smooth white hands, so unlike their mighty spades: but I was resolved to teach them in due time they had a true lord to rule over them, and kept my peace, and thus we fared toward the castle.

“There it rose on its green crest above the foothills, with its gaunt battlements and towers; and I meditated, as I neared it, on all the iron-handed, flinty-hearted ritters, my forbears, who had ridden forth under its gates to fight their feuds, lift their neighbors’ cattle, and strip the Magdeburg caravans, even as had the rascal I had lately captured. Hardly two generations since, and to be Graf von Regenstein had been to fear the Devil only a little and God not at all, and to be the wildest lance in all Saxony. Yet here was I, — lineal heir of those men, — returning to my ancestral home, with its dungeons, portcullis, sally-ports, its cavernous halls adorned with wolf-heads, bearskins, and dingy armor! But, lo! my head was filled with the tinkling of languishing Tuscan sonnets, and as we trudged up the hill I fell to musing

how one might describe the peaceful landscape in the Doric of Theocritus, — true language surely for 'such an idyl! A cursing in fiercest dialect, from Adolf, as his horse stumbled, recalled me in a trice from ancient Sicily to present Harzland. I glanced upward. We were almost beneath the fortress.

"No smug, smooth-stuccoed palazzo was Schloss Regenstein, fashioned after Messere Bramante's clever ideas filched from Vitruvius. Hard and harsh reared the castle, one great jagged mass of walls, battlements, gable roof and uncouth peak-capped donjons, — an inchoate thing, like the savage icebergs which sailors say course the northern seas. At first it seemed a single shapeless creation, wrought out of unhewn rock by the primeval giants and kobolds. Then as my awe of it began a little to wane, the thing took on a certain order. I could distinguish the steep winding way of hard round cobbles, the narrow drawbridge over the dizzy moat, the portcullis hanging its spikes like the welcoming upper fangs of a hungry monster. Behind that were walls — gray and sheer save for ominous loopholes. Within these walls, others still higher and more precipitous. Above these were standing what appeared to be portions of a vast rambling house with numerous arch-topped windows; again above this house — Ossa piled on Pelion — were three round towers of prodigious size, and from the tallest whipped a banner — my own green standard with the three white boars' heads. Upon the tower to the left dangled something black that was swinging slowly — a skeleton hung in chains.

"I was just meditating whether I should take this fell sight as an omen, when suddenly our approach seemed to have been observed in the castle above. Instantly all the windows above the battlement were crowded with faces, and right before me I saw no grim-visaged cross-bowmen, but flaxen curls and rosy faces, — a score of eager children, shouting

their '*Gruss!*' to their strange lord and master. And then — boom! boom! boom! three clouds of culverin smoke blew across the gate. I entered the castle, — not the Conte di Palaestro, but the Graf von Regenstein returning to his own.

I passed my hand across my forehead, saying inwardly 'At last I am in the North.'

* * * * *

"There is a precept, my dear Rocca, 'When in Rome do as the Romans do.' An excellent rule, removing a thousand absurdities; and its reverse is also excellent. 'When absent from Rome, conform yourself to your country.' Not indeed that I would advise imitating the rites and banquets of the fabled anthropophagi or of other utterly outlandish speaking-animals, but I esteem it both unwisdom and discourteous for the newcomer from one land to another to refuse to adapt himself to the honest habits of his hosts, assuming both have the names of decent folk and Christians. Therefore I think I quite scandalized Andrea by the way in which I drained a great horn of atrocious Harz-brewed ale which the fat and worthy seneschal's wife brought me when I leaped down in the castle court. And from that time on I strove diligently to appear, if not a right German, at least a compliant guest. Much do I fear I have offended the loyal folk around me; as when I so far forgot myself as to curse the heavy feather beds they had heaped up for me in the state chamber, and to adjure Andrea by all the saints to bring me my comfortable travelling pallet. Likewise the next morning I trod on Adolf's toes most sorely when I hinted my displeasure at suffering so many swine to root around the castle yard, delving in innumerable dunghills.

"But your Grace — may I humbly present to you — the honest pigs have rooted in these dunghills since Regenstein was a castle. 'Twere depriving them of an established privilege — an undoubted right. Whither shall they go?"

“‘To the sty or the field where God intended them. If I am king here, I will change their evil privilege, will-you, nill-you.’

“‘It shall be done, your Grace,’ grumbled the bear; but under his mustachios he kept muttering, ‘Oh, these Welschland (Italian) customs! What a lord we have over us! *Liebe Gott!* To remove the pigs!’

“But these are mere incidents. I can hardly call myself at home as yet, or master of my castle and destinies until my books have come from Augsburg. I have found some chambers in the fortress which can be fitted up very tolerably after Andrea has arranged my tapestries from Paris. I have had as yet time simply to assure myself that Regenstein is a very Emperor of strongholds. I promise myself a thousand interesting nights diverting myself with the tales of raids, forays, ghosts, goblins, witches, romances, fair and foul, in short, of adventures of every conceivable sort which every soul in the castle is eager to pour out to me whenever I deign my august ear to listen: so if I can only find paper enough in this place I can readily vie with Messere Boccaccio’s tales in the *Decamerone*. I have explored all the nooks and crannies of this vast pile of stone I call my mansion. Adolf has displayed for my admiration the long passage hewn in the living rock leading down to the privy sally-port; the numerous store chambers embedded likewise in the rocky bowels of the mountain. He has taken me out upon the topmost tower, by dizzy ladders over scaffoldings whence the rooks and daws fled noisily, and showed me the whole broad countryside spread out like a map of foreign seas: far to the east over the low hills he showed me the spires of the famed abbey church of Quedlenburg; to the west the nestling village of Heimbürg, ‘your Grace’s own peculiar domain land,’ as he explained; to north the wide flat plain with the turrets of Halberstadt dim in the distance; and to south the whole

wide green hill-land of the Harz, growing bolder and bolder as the eye followed the contours into the distance.

“‘Noble landscape,’ quoth I, in reply to his obvious demand for praise; ‘and well may my fathers have loved it. But this town to southward, with its castle upon a rock, rising like a worthy peer to Regenstein — what is its name? I have forgotten.’

“‘Blankenburg, your Grace, both town and castle.’

“‘A castle of the Duke of Brunswick, or of a fellow noble like myself?’

“‘Of the free and immediate Counts of Blankenburg, your Grace; even of your own condition.’

“‘Close neighbors we are, I vow, unless there is abundant love between us.’

“Adolf gave a great horse laugh.

“‘Ei; by St. Martin there were lively times in your Grace’s grandfather’s day — Graf Ludwig’s, I mean! Feud all the year long, — cutting down of beech trees, houghing of cattle, a good many peasants slaughtered, once a merry passage at arms in which we lost six stout men and they eight. But all is quiet now. The present Graf loves his beer and his hunt too well for long quarrels; and again, the Duke of Brunswick might interfere. Your Grace has nothing to dread. Besides, we have these.’ He pointed significantly to ‘Wake-up’ and ‘Roaring-Mol’ — two bell-mouthed wall-pieces that grinned harmlessly over the parapet.

“‘We shall not use them. I am entirely satisfied to have a nobleman of old family for neighbor. And has he no wife and family?’

“‘The Graf von Blankenburg,’ replied Adolf, as if under some constraint, ‘is a very peculiar lord. Your Grace will learn his habits later. His son Moritz is a most worthy young ritter, and his unmarried daughter, my Lady Ilsa, is reported pious and comely.’

“‘My Lady Ilsa,’ cried I with a laugh. ‘Excellent; I see the beginnings of a pleasant adventure already!’

“But here the blowing of a horn warned me of the visit of a Hamburg pedlar to the castle to chaffer for pins and ribbons with the maids, and I made haste to indite this letter that he might start it on its southward journey. Salute Madonna Marianna for me, and tell her I stand in no danger of this ‘pious and comely’ Graf’s daughter, and I pray you also to commend me to all my many friends at Rome.”

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CHAPTER VI

ILSA OF THE HARZ

I WILL quote no more letters to Rocca. Truth to tell, by my praises addressed to him of the beauty of the land and by my hints of admiration for the rough virtues of the people, I was but heartening myself up, as do men when they sing lustily ere plunging into the battle. Seldom have I spent three more heartsick, homesick weeks than the first three that crept by at Schloss Regenstein, after the novelty had waned. Some excitement there was on the second day when I had uncovered a deep but dry well, and we found a goodly quantity of bones at the bottom — relics no doubt of obstinate merchants who withheld their proper ransoms. But the tingle of discovery soon passed. My eyes were offended with a thousand uncouth domestic sights, my ears by the constant gutturals of my vassals' dialect, my nose — enough that good Herr Adolf and his fellow myrmidons had many things to learn, — at least I forced them to remove the great dung heap that was stacked right under my chamber windows. Ah! Marianna — if you would have seen my loyalty and longing for the south rekindle, you should have seen me then!

As a chief misery I had no person of my own condition in life with whom I could exchange a word. A few inquiries developed that the Graf von Blankenburg and his children were visiting some noble kinsmen beyond Halberstadt. There was no other man entitled to coat-armor in the region,

nor even any half-learned monk who could fence with me in bad Latin. Heavy rains delayed the coming of my principal baggage from Augsburg, and kept me far from my dear books. Father Joseph, the castle chaplain, was too deaf and doddering to do more than shuffle through his chapel masses, — which I honored by my absence. Even the great boar whereof Adolf promised the hunting, disappeared when we sent out the beaters, and we returned from the chase with two miserable hares, scarce worth the pursuing. To add to my unhappiness Andrea poured out his complaints day and night, consigning Regenstein, Harzland, Germany, and all dwellers therein to instant and eternal perdition, quarrelling with all the maids and varlets in the castle, and making it not the least of their offences that they did not understand his anathemas vociferated in fiercest and most idiomatic Tuscan.

And then came a day after the storms; a day of calm green and golden beauty the like whereof I thought I had never met on sea or land.

A warm sweet air seemed to come sweeping down from the mountains; an air of growing leaves and bursting flowers; an air of talking oaks and great pines sighing like the waves of a wide green ocean. All the Harzland was pushing back the mists, and calling “come out hither!” And as if in answer to the call I felt my spirits rising, my feet stirring almost perforce under me. Many, many times since I have heard that call — the call of the summer forest of the North, — a call no lush and luxuriant Southland wood can find voice to utter! a call of cool streams leaping over cool rocks, while the great sun warms the fragrant ferns above them. And as often as that call comes, a dozen times during spring-time and summer, I am become like the bird who has wintered afar in the tropics, but at the bidding of the season must away. So succumbing to the gentle magic of the hour,

I found myself alone, happily alone, and happy to be lost in the greenwood, wandering over the hills by Schloss Regenstein.

How long I wandered I do not know. I had my rapier — I feared nothing. I had bread in my wallet — I would not grow hungry. I drank a clear draught from a moss-clustered spring gushing out of the primeval rock. I started a squirrel and sent him scampering away across the upper branches. I followed for a long way into the thickets some calling thrush that lured me onward and onward like a sweet-voiced will-o'-the-wisp. At last I brought myself upon a little path that led upward beside a trickling brook, over ferns and bluebells; with here and there the tracks of some loitering deer. The sun was striking in golden slants through a clearing, and I sat down upon a fallen log to listen to the rustling melody of the greenwood. There I fell naturally into a musing. My gift of sonnet-making came back to me. I was wandering into some imitation of Petrarco in praise of the glories of the forest, when I detected a sound — a human sound. Nothing to alarm, that was certain, though I confess in that strange woodland I clapped a hand instinctively upon my hilt. It was the voice of a woman — as I guessed, of a young girl. Not wishing to have her burst suddenly upon me, I stepped lightly back into a thicket and waited.

The singer was quite out of sight, although her clear crooning music proclaimed that she was close at hand. Nearer she came, and first I saw a pair of white feet and ankles twinkling in and out amid the twigs and grasses, — feet that Messere Raffaello would have rejoiced to get for model. I saw the feet while yet the screen of beech saplings hid her face. Her song was in broad Harz dialect. I caught glimpses of a loose blue frock. Then into the open she passed, and as I stepped from my covert I had a sight of a daintily

poised head, two long braids of golden hair, cheeks exceeding red, eyes exceeding blue, and such prettily curved lines of face and throat that they seemed blooming into life from some Vatican canvass. A sight for a moment only. Back went the head like a startled doe's. The cheeks flashed to scarlet. She drew up with abrupt pride, as well she might, upon seeing a totally strange gentleman step from a covert.

I was half ashamed at my action, but reflected that a Harz peasant maid was not likely to prove timid or prudish.

"Fair greetings, my fine lass," I said in my best German; "this is truly a pleasant day to go walking in the green-wood."

She surveyed me very steadily, then to my infinite surprise crossed herself upon the breast.

"I think," said she, looking at me with great soberness, "that you are the Master Devil. But I warn you, you can do me no hurt, for I am an honest Christian maid, and the blessed St. Anna is my protectress."

Was ever a good cavalier greeted thus before! I confess it was I who was staggered a little, although I could scarcely keep from laughing.

"My worthy maiden," said I, "I will not pretend to saintly virtues, but I am not so often known as the Master Devil as the Graf von Regenstein."

I had expected a mortified smirk and simper at this, when the worthy daughter of some forester or huntsman discovered her mistake. Instead, I saw the golden head and blue frock bend in a graceful and highly decorous courtesy.

"I beg my Lord of Regenstein's pardon," she said, with a grave simplicity that disarmed any reply. "If he will persist in wandering in our wood in a dark dress with a blue hat and an eagle's feather, he will remember that although such costume may be excellent for Italy, it is in exactly such a garb as we are taught is worn by the Master Devil, especially

as your lordship has a little black mustache and a smooth chin."

By this time I had the offending hat off, and was sweeping the feather against my knees, for I was not wholly lacking in wits. "And who may be the gracious lady I have the honor to address?" I asked.

"Ilsa of the Harz; Ilsa von Blankenburg, who claims your Lordship's service."

Another courtesy; out went a small white hand, and I bowed low whilst I kissed it. Peasant maiden! All the noble pride and dignity of a Cleopatra was in her bearing when I stood before her, and explained, as I might, my unmannerly intrusion. And then as I strove to find elegant words, suddenly I saw a marvellous change come over her beauty. The dignity all vanished to the winds. Before me was standing an arch, golden-haired, bright-cheeked girl who was laughing in pure music at my confusion.

"Graf von Regenstein, — and I have called you the Master Devil, and adjured you as the fiend! Oh, blessed Mother, was there ever confusion like to that!" Her laughter went on and on, until I fell to laughing too, and then we both laughed, — the best way to cement a friendship.

And after a little, I hardly know how or why, I was walking along that path through the forest, with Gräfin Ilsa chattering at my elbow as freely as to her own brother. She seemed a mere child to me as I looked and listened, yet I could not forget that long flash of noble dignity at our first encounter. And how much she had to tell! Yes, she was the only daughter of the Graf von Blankenburg. They had returned only two days since from Halberstadt. At their schloss they had been filled by the servants with stories of the new lord of Regenstein, of his Italian clothes, Italian servants, and Italian accent. It had rained since their coming, otherwise her father would surely have sent over to offer hos-

pitality. Her brother Moritz I would rejoice to see. He had served in the southern wars and had been clear to Rome, and once had actually seen the Holy Father. Had I also seen the Holy Father? Yes? Several times? And actually conversed with him? Oh! How sinful she had been; how could I, how could the saints, forgive her? To have mistaken a pious Christian gentleman fresh from the Apostolic benison for the author of lies? Of course I could not fail to be an exceeding good man, having lived in the veritable atmosphere of saintliness surrounding the Lord Pope.

If I turned my head at this last, remembering somewhat of my last scenes and pleasures at the Vatican, I did not contradict her, and she soon wandered on. Had I heard of her aunt, the great Abbess Theckla of the nuns of Quedlinburg? No? Well, even a learned Italian like myself could yet hear something to advantage. There was no one in all the world — save the Lord Pope — so holy as Aunt Theckla. Sometimes she prayed all night in winter in a thin shift in the cold church, kneeling on sharp chains. To atone for her own sins? Not at all. It was for the sins of her family, — her brother, his son, and especially for her niece.

But here I had to cry out perforce. “Ah! gracious Gräfin, — you do not mean she prays for sins of *yours*?”

“Why not?” The answer came with a matter-of-fact seriousness truly startling. “Of course I am very sinful. If it were not for Aunt Theckla’s prayers, I should surely go to hell. As it is, I hope the good Lord God will some day let me out of purgatory. Do you think He will?” This question straight in my face, and asked with all the honesty in the world.

O tempora! O mores! How was I, gayest of the gallants of Rome, with my head filled with Plato and Porphyry and Avicenna, and every other doubting misbeliever, to answer this question, levelled at me by a young girl whom I had

met not half an hour before? I confess I dared not look her in the face.

"But, noble Lady, do you not by your own pious efforts try to appease the saints?"

"Of course," came the same calm answer. "I belong to 'St. Ursula's Little Ship.'"

"I crave pardon, gracious Gräfin, but I do not understand."

"I forget," with a little sigh of impatience. "You are from Italy. I mean the 'Sodality of the Eleven Thousand Virgins.' We are all pledged to pray regularly, and say two Credos, five Paternosters, and fifty Ave Marias every day. We fast all we can, and pray to St. Ursula of Cologne. Besides that I wear haircloth all of Lent, and pray still more to St. Anna. You see, she entreats her blessed daughter Mary for us, and makes the Holy Virgin get the Lord Christ to show us mercy. It is clearly explained in a little book I bought at the last Halberstadt fair. But all this, they say, is not enough to satisfy the Lord God. If it were not for Aunt Theckla, I could never sleep, I would be so afraid of hell."

I think by this time I would have welcomed a bear out of the forest, just to change this flow of personal theology; but I was saved by less drastic means.

"Did I know where she was going?" I had been following her blindly, forgetful of forest or stream, but now I became interested in the path. She would tell me. She was going to visit Dame Hedwig, "a very wise woman." Surely not a witch? Dame Hedwig had been confessed only last month by Father Augustin. But she gathered all manner of healing herbs in the forest, and Gräfin Ilsa must needs visit her to renew the supply at Schloss Blankenburg. And why had the Graf's daughter gone this solitary road without escort? Another wonderful laugh rewarded my question. Had she

not wandered over the slopes of the Harzland since she was at her nurse's knee? Did she not know every trout-pool, every pine crest from the Brocken to the wondrous Bode-thal? The red deer were her friends. All the peasant folk loved her. What need of a pack of silly serving-men to scamper at her heels?

She led me onward till the leafy path came out upon a more traversed way, which brought us soon into a still more open clearing. Here before us to the westward spread a noble vista of the pine-crowned hills, and in the purple distance, a monarch among the summits, which Lady Ilsa was not slow to tell me, was the famous Brocken. A long tale was soon being poured into my ears of the awful witches who flew every evening on broomsticks from the Witches' Dancing Ground above the rushing Bode to this weird summit, there to consort the night through with their lord, the Master Devil. "And I thought you had come down by day from the Brocken to visit them," she was saying sweetly, when we halted before a little thatch-roofed hut, with a great oak tree spreading its ample shade over the cavernous chimney.

Dame Hedwig was before the door, watering her bright array of hollyhocks. Her bent old shape courtesied as she saw the Gräfin, while she looked up at me from under her white cap with shrewd gray eyes of questioning. My new friend made haste to explain who I might be and what was her errand, and Hedwig courtesied again when Ilsa had ceased, and I could feel her keen gaze going all over me.

"Ei: so you are the new 'Countly Grace,' the Lord of Regenstein? You the heir of old Graf Sigismund who was lord when I was a girl? How times have changed! And so you are just come from the Welschland? —"

I cannot say I felt complimented at her running commentary as she bustled about her little kitchen, opening bags and boxes, and making up sundry small packages for the lady.

"I am not unworthy of Graf Sigismund and the rest, I trust," I said a little stiffly, put on the defensive by her cold scrutiny, and somewhat piqued as I saw that the Gräfin regarded her comments with suppressed amusement.

"Unworthy? I said not that to your Lordship. Your Lordship is like an unproved herb among my simples. How can I tell yet whether you can kill or cure? Graf Sigismund had a two-handed sword as long as a man. Your Lordship carries — that." Her skinny finger pointed contemptuously at my slight rapier.

"Nevertheless, honest Dame," I said, "weak though my rapier seem, I avow I can hold my own against any master of the greater weapon. It is not a matter of strength, but of skill — thus — and thus — and thus —" And carried away with pride in my martial art, I swept out the glittering blade and flashed it about with rapid feints and passes.

Dame Hedwig showed her sharp teeth testily.

"I don't question your skill with that bodkin, young Lord. I only know everything from your beardless chin to your flourishings now, and the way you talk with your hands more than with your tongue, prove that you are no German."

"No German?" I was beginning to lose my temper. "This noble lady here will pardon me if I tell you I demand a civil tongue from my equals and my inferiors. I am hereditary lord of Regenstein, only son of the last Graf. I have ever defended my father's people and land against the slanders of Italians, and I will not now, on my return to my possessions, be told that I am a stranger and interloper amongst them."

Hedwig put down the bag of wormwood and walked straight up to me. Her attitude was respectful, but firm. I could see that Ilsa was watching all we did.

"No offence, noble Lord. When you spoke then, I saw your eye light up in a manner worthy of the Grafs your

fathers. Regenstein you may be, and German you may become. But you are not yet. Will your Lordship hold out your right hand? "

I complied, half misdoubting her intentions. She opened my fingers and peered, with her sharp nose down into the palm, then dropped it abruptly.

"What do you read, Hedwig?" asked Ilsa, with a very girlish giggle.

"Read? Oh! He has a life line and a wealth line both favorable. He shall have two affairs of the heart, the first sorrowful and broken, the second exceeding joyous."

Ilsa clapped her own hands, ejaculating, "How excellent!" But Hedwig went on. "Above all a great change shall come into his life. A change altering the whole of his being, — his mode of thought, speech, hope, life, soul —"

"Ah! tell!" commanded the young lady. Hedwig, however, shook her head, and looked up craftily into my face.

"Noble Lord, I cannot tell the rest. But if you are wise, give ear." She half danced, half glided away from me, all the time keeping my eye, and chanted shrilly:—

"Half of Northland,
Half of Southland,
Never gay
Till all of *one* land!"

"Do you understand?" she concluded, with a meaning smile.

Before I could decide whether to be pleased or to be angry, a clatter of hoofs sounded outside the cottage. I saw half a dozen mounted serving men with lances and crossbows, and at their head a lady in the sweeping white robes of a sovereign abbess, upon a stately black palfrey. Ilsa had sprung to the door as the cortege drew up, making a very wry face the while.

"Aunt Theckla," she threw out. "I knew she would be vexed if I came to Hedwig's."

A nimble young squire had dismounted and approached the door abruptly, though he veiled his cap before the lady.

"Gracious Gräfin," said he, "I am commanded to say that the reverend abbess your aunt is not pleased at your custom of visiting this woman of doubtful honesty. Having learned for what purpose you left the castle, she has ridden hither to fetch you back to Blankenburg, and your prompt obedience will spare me further mixing in an unpleasant duty."

Ilsa looked back with another wry face. I stood by the chimney, disliking an introduction to the reverent abbess in such a dubious spot.

"Fare you well," spoke the Gräfin, as if to Hedwig, "just for a little. I don't mind the scolding, if my aunt is a saint. I am so glad you were not the Master Devil! We'll go hunting together after the red deer by the Brocken. *Aufwiedersehen!*"

And with that she was gone. I heard the murmur of a brief, sharp colloquy with the abbess, doubtless accented by the fact that Lady Ilsa had carried forth a neat little packet of Hedwig's simples under her elbow. I saw the Gräfin clamber upon a pillion behind the squire. A clatter of hoofs — the troop was gone, and the young mistress with it. It was as if a sunbeam had vanished from the cottage. The sun still shone unclouded, but darkened. Inscrutable as she had been in her mode of greeting, her mingling of the serious and the gay, her girlishness, yet her occasional bursts of high womanhood, I felt myself wholly baffled at the impression she had made upon me. I stood in silence while Hedwig glanced cautiously out of the door to be sure her unwelcome guests were gone.

"The abbess is like flint," she spoke at length; "all white, and pure, and hard —"

I took out a gulden and laid it significantly on the table.

"Hark you, wise dame," I said civilly; "while I deny I am a foreigner here, I confess I lack your local gossip. Who is this Gräfin von Blankenburg I met by chance in the forest?"

"A moonbeam, a spring rose, a wood dove with an eagle's heart and will."

"You have known her, then?"

"Ei! Didn't I help her into the world the day her mother — God rest her soul — passed from it?"

"Good woman," I continued, "my folk at the castle do not like to give me an evil opinion of my noble neighbors. Whenever I ask of the Graf of Blankenburg they praise his hunting and let it go at that."

"Holy St. Elizabeth — well they may!"

"What is he, then?"

She looked slyly at the coin.

"Your Lordship will not reveal *I* told you tales. The Graf of Blankenburg had his coat of arms burned on the cheek of a castle varlet last year just for telling a few stories about his betters."

"You are safe, continue."

"Well, in a word, he is the most drunken, roaring, cruel lord in all Saxony and Brunswick. Two months since he had a peasant's guts torn out and wound around a tree — and just for barking the trunk thereof. 'To cover the peeled part,' said his Lordship, merrily. He forces the peasants to beat the bushes by night to quiet the frogs. He leads his whole trampling hunt across their cornfields. He forces their children to serve in the castle without pay — and woe then to the honest, modest wenches among his foul varlets."

"Verily," said I, with a dry shrug, "I have a right courtly neighbor!"

"Pray God, he will not last very long. Graf Moritz, his son, is a very prudent, honorable young lord. But his father will have drunk and gambled away nigh everything. Moritz

will get nothing but the stripped acres and the bare castle. Poor young ritter — we all pity him.”

“You seem to have no pity for Lady Ilsa, however?”

“Pity? My heart has broken long since for her. I’ll lament no more. How she has lived through these years and not become even as her sire, the Holy Mother knows! But she will become a saint, and need none of our pity.”

“Become a saint? I really saw no signs of that.”

“Then she did not tell your Lordship? Her aunt is resolved she should join her in the convent. She works upon the Graf’s fears, saying ‘Give your daughter to God, and He will spare your soul.’ As yet he has not consented, but he will give way at last. He fears hell, and well he may.”

“And Lady Ilsa?”

“Will of course yield. She is betwixt the abbess all ice, and her father all vice.”

“Ah!” I let the conversation drop. Hedwig pointed out my way to Regenstein, and I walked back, under the long northern twilight, filled with thought. This then was the destined fate of the baffling creature who had crossed my path this day. The veiling in the church; the shorn hair; the severance from the world; the perpetual fast, vigil, and service; the hardening monotony of years of routine performance; the shadows of old age. Once I tried to contrast Ilsa and my glorious Marianna; the thing was impossible: who can contrast the noontide sun with starlight? Yet the starlight had its beauty. I confess I was not sorry, in my isolation at Regenstein, to think there was a young woman within reach to whom I could pay my addresses. Just how far my addresses should go, whether even they should be entirely honorable, I admit I did not let come into my consideration. But I was determined not to let any ill-repute of the father prevent me from company with the daughter.

The next morning, when Andrea came to shave me, I ordered him to take his razor away.

"I will not be stared at by all the country. I will grow a beard."

"But Eccellenza?" he began in dismay.

"And furthermore, I will order over a tailor from Halberstadt to have my clothes made in the German fashion."

He was too agonized now even to protest. As for myself, I leaned upon the casement and gazed forth upon the neighborly battlements of Schloss Blankenburg. Old Hedwig's words were running in my head:—

"Half of Northland,
Half of Southland,
Never gay
Till all of *one* land."

"Perhaps," I said very carelessly to myself, "Lady Ilsa will never enter the convent."

CHAPTER VII

WHAT BEFELL AT SCHLOSS BLANKENBURG

Two days later young Lord Moritz rode over from Blankenburg, and with blunt civility invited me to join in the hunt; and I ran down a red deer that afternoon in his company, enjoying a notable chase. His sister rode with us. She mounted a tall Pomeranian bay, taking the hedges and ravines like a Turkish trooper. She wore a bewitching green habit, with a green silk cap set with a long red feather; and was in at the death, aiding us in flogging off the dogs. "A proper novitiate for a destined nun," I meditated, as I watched her spring unaided from the saddle, her golden hair flying, her eyes dancing, her cheeks all red and bloom with fair excitement.

Artlessly as the brook she chattered, and I found the same delight in her company one would take with a merry child. Our chase led us far over the Harz, beside the rocky windings of the stream by the Ilsenburg, and while we halted to watch the slim trout shooting in the pools, my companion told me the story of the Princess Ilse — her namesake of legend — the king's daughter who dwelt on the crags above the stream, and all that befell her. As for Ritter Moritz, I found him a sober young cavalier, courteous after a blunt way, and very anxious to show civility. I could guess that his position at Blankenburg was a hard one, and resolved to return his friendship. The next day my precious books arrived at the Regenstein and I was happy for the next two weeks.

Then came an invitation to spend the evening with the Graf von Blankenburg, and since I was beginning to grow tired even of Homer, Sophocles, and Politiano, I was not sorry to signify my acceptance.

* * * * *

I rode over to Schloss Blankenburg in what state I could affect. My neighbor's castle was much like my own, only in general more dingy, though not without some display of tawdry magnificence. There was a swarm of lousy grooms and hangers-on in the dirty court. My troop was saluted with much blowing of horns and burning of powder. In the entrance to the great hall Graf Eckbert came to meet me, and his person did not belie the character Dame Hedwig gave him. He had a girth nigh equal his moderate stature; sandy, frowsy hair and beard, with small bluish eyes peering out of as seared and sensual face as ever there was betwixt Kiel and Basel. Two missing teeth gave his jaw a most uncanny grin. A great staff of a sabre clattered at his thigh. His green velvet jacket boasted much gold lace, but was slovenly with wine stains. In short, his person was such that it took all my self-control to greet this noble lord courteously, as my equal and my neighbor.

But Moritz was there, gravely and properly arrayed; and leaning on his shoulder was Gräfin Ilsa, bedecked even as St. Dorothea, a rose branch in her hand, a rose wreath on her hair, and a great bunch of roses and cherries tied to her silver girdle. She wore a blue sweeping gown of Antwerp taffeta, and some very good pearls at her throat. I wondered a little at this display of taste and wealth, knowing the condition of the Blankenburg estate, but it later appeared that the jewels and dress were the gifts of her uncle, the Castellan of Wittenberg.

Graf Eckbert, whatever his sins, was not taciturn. My flesh crept as he kissed me on both cheeks. He poured a

volley of maudlin compliments in my ear, asked fifty questions without awaiting an answer, introduced me to half a dozen oafish creatures, whom I discovered were local petty nobles, or discharged lanz-knecht subalterns, — for which “full-brothers” he evidently kept continually a roaring open house, — and so led me into the great hall to the seat at his right on the upper dais. The rest of the company scrambled for places near by. One petty officer thrust himself into a seat more exalted than his deserts, and was pushed out with tumult. Soon the feast was in full progress. The hall shone all black and red under the smoking pine torches. The greasy old server brought us vast lumps of boars’ meat on dingy pewter platters. In the long hall under the dais, a score of dirty retainers chattered, gorged, and quarrelled over the brawn and beer at the table below. All of which time I, the honored guest, thought gloomily on how in that whole castle there was not one soul save myself who so much as knew the names of Homer and Dante, and I tried to picture the delightful little supper the Cardinale di Palaestrina was surely serving that night on the Aventine, — and the wit, the learning and the elegance of the ladies.

But just as the feast started there was a trifling hush, while with a great rustle into the hall swept my lady abbess of Quedlinburg and took her seat at my other hand. She might well have become a sculptured saint. It needed only to turn her black robes, the white frill of her cap, the pale pink of her face, into hard porphyry, — then the image would have been complete. In her youth Lady Theckla could not have been uncomely. The lines of her mouth were refined, but ungentle. She spoke to me in a clear monotone, opening her lips very little. The only lively thing about her seemed her steel-blue eyes. I did not love this close sight of the abbess. I told myself one might argue half eternity with that fine strong face, and win only denial; and as for pity or

charity, you could more wisely beseech the stone saint, for then your prayers were at least heard up in heaven.

Grievous to tell, her coming did not impose the least check upon the conversation of her brother and his boon companions, which was at all times unspeakably foul, — so foul that I winced as I looked across the table at Gräfin Ilsa, who sat silent and a little pale, while the great hall buzzed around her, — a very different person from the merry creature in the woodland and at the hunt.

Graf Eckbert was so anxious to air his views that he graciously spared me the trouble of much speaking. He dominated the entire discussion, his other guests and his children giving respectful attention to his loudly delivered wisdom. That the world was awry, and Germany in particular, he informed me long before the platters of boars' flesh had been replaced by those of venison. He cursed the Emperor Maximilian, whom he described as a shuffling dotard who starved Germany to feed his Austrian lands; he damned the last Imperial Diet as a gathering of fools; particularly he devoted to the pit the authors of the recent decree forbidding private warfare to the nobility.

"As if we, Walter" (he appropriated my first name at the outset), "if *we* fell into any merry little debate, could not settle it with our own good pikes and crossbows, and not have to call in a snivelling, black-gowned clerk with a pen behind his ear, to draw up parchments, patter in Latin to a court, and then cheat us out of fair justice for a beggering fee."

"Your Lordship does not believe in courts, then?" I ventured to ask.

"Ay, by St. Laurenz, but not of that kind. Courts are for peasants. I hold court myself every Monday. Two fellows were triced up on the gallows the other day for cutting firewood in my forest! Zounds — they ought to have been drawn and quartered, but I am too tenderhearted!" A

tear trickled down his nose at recollection of his signal mercy.

"Your Lordship," I said, "does exceeding well to avoid lawyers. There is an old Florentine proverb 'may sorrow, evil, and lawyers be far from thee.'"

"Well said, Walter, — well said." His vast hand clapped me on the back outrageously. "Here, rascal. Bring the noble Graf a deeper flagon. Put good warm Rhenish in it. We will teach him how deep a true Harzlander can go. 'Tis under the table for all of us before morning. Tengulden, Walter, that you go there before me!"

I could see the face of Lady Ilsa growing whiter than ever. Her father had evidently begun his challenges to deep potations very early. I saw her sign to her aunt, and the abbess leaning towards us tried to turn her brother's conversation.

"It is not time for the wine yet, Eckbert. Our guest is not yet thirsty. Do I understand that your Lordship has spent several years in Rome?"

"I have had the honor, Reverend Abbess," I replied.

"I am glad, for now you can contradict my impious nephew here. Moritz was as quiet and God-fearing a lad as ever said his prayers until he went to Italy; on his return he vows he is almost a Turkish unbeliever, so great was the luxury and frivolity which he dares to assert were displayed by many churchmen, dwellers at His Holiness's actual court, and even by certain most sacred cardinals."

Moritz looked up from his trencher at me, and his sober eyes winked slyly.

"Surely," spoke Ilsa, hanging on my answer, "Moritz is a wicked boy. He repeats these dreadful lies just to dismay us all, because we, forsooth, have never been to Italy and Rome."

"Lies! Lies!" vociferated her father, not waiting for me. "I vow they are. Almost heresy — and never shall heretic dwell in Schloss Blankenburg, not even my own child."

"Your Lordship will soon learn," observed Moritz quietly, with a sidling glance at his aunt, "that my father, though liberal in other matters, is a valiant defender of Holy Church and all things touching her."

"Well, then," roared the Graf, "speak it out, Walter. Has not Moritz lied outrageously concerning Rome and the Holy Pope's court? Don't spare him if he is my son."

Alas for my courtesy! A man cannot sit through a feast like that and not give place to the devil. I had one eye in my head when I answered,

"No foreigner can visit Rome and the Holy Father's court and not see many things he is liable to misunderstand. I do not doubt that my noble friend Moritz *did* hear of one or two cardinals whose lives were a bit worldly. You see the Lord Pope, with the best of intentions, is sometimes surrounded by a few self-seeking men."

"Only a 'few' — do you hear, Moritz?" cried his father, putting down a prodigious goblet, which he had drained at a draught. "And the rest, of course —" a long hiccough finished the remark.

"No doubt His Holiness," interposed the abbess, "will soon reduce these unworthy cardinals to pious regularity. I am told the Pope delivers daily most eloquent and edifying sermons in the new church of St. Peter."

Moritz's lip curled.

"I never heard of the Pope's preaching any sermons," he sneered. "There is only one preacher in all Christendom I ever cared for."

"And who is he, graceless boy?" asked his aunt.

"Dr. Martin Luther, the Augustinian friar of Wittenberg. If all parsons were like him, I'd be a holier man and a better listener at church."

"He is a pious young monk, I've heard," said his aunt coldly, "but naturally not comparable to His Holiness. Of

course you, my Lord Graf, have often heard the present Pope turn multitudes from their sins by his burning eloquence."

"I have certainly seen him appear in great state at St. John Lateran," I replied, with twitching lips, "on Corpus Christi day, when thousands of people knelt to adore him in a place so holy that the former Pope Benedict VIII — of blessed memory — said that if the folk only knew how great indulgence was afforded by a mere visit to that church they would sin yet more."

"And his sermon?"

"I regret, my Lady Abbess, on that day His Holiness was suffering from a cold. He could only hold up his fingers to bestow the benediction. I merely mention the occasion as witness to the veneration in which the Romans hold the most sacred Pontiff."

Moritz looked at me reproachfully. He had evidently expected a more active defence of his heterodoxy. Perhaps the heady wine — which I was being forced very reluctantly to imbibe by my importunate host — was making me reckless; I resolved not to disappoint Moritz.

"But on thousands of other occasions," spoke Ilsa, evidently deeply interested, "the Lord Pope has preached to the multitude, to the vast saving of their souls. A wandering Dominican, very dirty and very holy, told me as much yesterday."

"Then," I replied dryly and rashly, "your gracious Ladyship was very ill informed, for I grieve to tell you his present Holiness, though a very learned and urbane prince, is better at playing cards than saying masses, and a better huntsman than preacher."

It must have been the wine that made me throw this out bluntly. I saw the abbess nigh swooning back in her chair, muttering "blasphemy!" Poor Ilsa turned deathly

pale, Moritz grinned in manifest glee, but his father almost jumped from his seat, his face growing livid.

"God's death! Take back your words —"

"Father! Father! Our guest," cried Ilsa in dismay, while Moritz caught his sleeve, at the same time asserting that "He has only said what I have always said."

Unwilling to brawl then and there, I turned on my angry host very coolly.

"My gracious Lord," I said, "I do not mean to slander the Sacred Pontiff. I was about to add that the Pope suffers from an ulcer which prevents him from executing the various sacred offices, and that his physicians recommend to him divers innocent diversions."

"Ah! Very well," quoth the Graf, mollified for the moment, and settling back in his great chair. But the abbess and Ilsa still stared at me ominously, accepting my last words at true value.

The feast proceeded. It was impossible for me, without giving dire offence, to avoid drinking large quantities of the fiery Rudesheimer. I boasted a strong head, but I felt I was gradually losing complete self-mastery. With a kind of dread I found the conversation drifting again toward religious topics. Graf Eckbert had been airing more of his grievances.

"The times are evil. Wholly out of joint! The peasants, insolent hounds, think themselves as good as their masters. They drink wine in place of beer, and are actually enraged if you flog them. All from lack of piety! True religion is dying out. How can the clod-hoppers hope to obey God if they do not first obey their masters? To hell they'll go, all of them."

"Their masters, of course," I added viciously, "setting an example of all Christian graces."

"Graces? What d'ye say?" the Graf's mind leaped from

one thing to another. "What need have *we*, the ritters, of graces? Can't we drink, swear, indulge, carouse, kill as we like, and square with the saints at the end? The saints are very good-natured, I tell you. We do as we please, and at the end, a good indulgence from some vendor, a few acres given the abbey, the merits that come of owning some saints' relics — ei! — we slip through Master Satan's fingers like a greased pig, and up we go to heaven!"

"So your pious Lordship owns some saints' relics?" I asked, fingering my goblet.

"Relics! By my father's soul; haven't I squandered half my fortune on them! Suffering in this world to lay up treasure in heaven, as says Father Augustin." Tear-drops were again on his nose at thought of his piety. "Three hairs of St. Laurenz, plucked by a soldier just ere he was toasted on the gridiron; a finger nail of St. John the Less; a toe of St. Agatha, and the whole right thigh bone of St. Anthony. Here, Dietrich — bring me the reliquary."

"You need not hasten," spoke up Moritz, whom the wine had rendered wholly irresponsible; "that thigh bone is from a pig, as any but a fool can recognize. At Pisa there are *both* thigh bones of the self-same saint. My father was easily hoodwinked by the glozing friar who sold it him." He glanced at me for confirmation.

"Certainly," I nodded recklessly, though imagining a storm. "I have seen them there myself; only, there is still another pair at Mantua. I fear the worthy saint —"

But this time I had roused the demon. Mine host bounded out of his chair, and seized me furiously by the shoulder.

"Holy Wounds! Will you say I was cheated, and that to my very face? Men have died for less than that!"

"Very possibly," I replied, with drunken abandon, loosening his clutch. "But I shall not. And now, Graf von Blankenburg, since you would lay hands on a guest, and insult me

before your family and servants, hear at length the truth. All the country-side proclaims you the most profligate, cruel, dastardly lord in the Harzland. You prate of the saints, when you care as little for saintliness as a dog for Lent."

He brandished his fists in my face, but for the instant I held him back by the lightnings in my eyes.

"You make your daughter to be pitied by every old woman and every clown. You think to smuggle yourself into heaven, when hell — if hell there be — yawns to receive you. You are one of those Germans who make the German name hateful in Italy, as the name for false piety, oafishness, swinishness, and pure devilishness."

But here, with a great beast-like roar, he had broken away from Moritz, trying to hold him, and clutched a heavy boar's spear from the rack behind the table. I paused in my torrent of words just enough to see the weapon glittering over his head, and whing! — it had shot across my shoulder, just grazing the skin, and dug into the table below the dais. A scream from Ilsa, the abbess rising with every sign of horror, shouts, runnings to and fro, some of my own Regensteiners hurrying me from the hall, a rending volley of curses from the Graf, who was struggling with his son and trusted retainers, — it all passed like a hideous dream.

I was outside the castle and standing under the black night while they brought up the horses. The cool wind was lessening the effects of the wine. I looked upward. Above me was the selfsame canopy of stars that had been when Marianna and I had gazed upon them together, sitting still and close in the Vatican gardens. Marianna! At the moment I was ready to retract every word spoken publicly or privately in praise of Germany; to denounce it as the most man-accursed and God-forsaken land on the wide earth, from the savage Indes to roaring Muscovy.

"By Zeus and the Styx," I swore in true classic style,

"let me but live out one year in this crow's-nest of mine, and then back to Italy — and to *her!*"

In this mood I fared home to Regenstein. The next morning, sober, and with a headache, I sent Adolf with my cartel, telling the Graf von Blankenburg I must needs desire to meet him on the field of honor, the insult which he proffered me affording but one atonement.

* * * * *

However, in the cool of the day, as I walked moody and alone in the little pine grove at the foot of the Regenstein, lo! out of the trees, as in the manner of an apparition, glided Gräfin Ilsa. She was white as new paper; her eyes were red: her hair flew uncombed over her shoulders; her dress was sombre and mean. Much embarrassed at her coming, I stood stock still, while she, moving up to me, paused as if to take courage, then without more ado knelt at my very feet. Next her words came, mingled in a torrent of sobbing.

"Oh, you are generous! You are noble and forgiving. *Liebe Gott*, do not, do not —"

"Do not what, gracious Lady?" I asked, still sorely confused myself.

"Do not press this duel on my father. You know he was in his cups. He has treated you — his own guest — most foully. He sought your life. But Moritz egged you both on. Be merciful, be generous — spare him, spare!"

All her womanly dignity was gone. I seemed dealing with a very young girl.

"Noble Gräfin," I said, drawing myself up, "arise. Let us talk calmly. You know what men of my rank mean by 'honor.' And has not mine been basely stained? How can I suffer this insult to pass?"

"Yes, yes," she moaned, still at my knees. "I understand. It is 'honor' when you, a master swordsman, meet my father. He is old; his hand unsteady. Ten passes and he is dead. And then" — She pressed her hands to her face.

"Dear Lady," I replied, I thought not unkindly, striving to raise her; "then you and yours will be rid of one who has made your life wretched; who has wearied heaven with his deeds."

But now she caught my girdle, and seemed like some wild bird struggling in defence of its young and nest.

"Ah! you have said it. Sinful he is, vile, godless. I begged of Aunt Theckla, 'will his saints' relics save him? Will he ever join my blessed mother up in heaven?' And she only looked at me in her unmoved way, and said, 'It will take vast indulgence and good works, and then I cannot tell.' She dared not say the devils were waiting for his soul, but I know it. Oh, blessed Christ, but I am so miserable! Hear now, Lord Graf; if kill you must, kill me! I can bear it. I can die, wicked as I am. Even the dreadful quenchless fire will not feel so terrible, when I think 'I endure this to ransom the soul of my father.'"

She had seized the skirt of my cloak, and clung piteously. And I, being neither iron nor adamant, could not hear unmoved.

"Dear Lady," I said very gently now, "if any man in Rome had ever told me I would overlook an insult like that of last night, and not make the doer walk up my rapier, the sayer himself would have eaten his words or died for it; but you fight me with weapons I cannot parry. If any saint can open the gate of heaven for the Graf von Blankenburg, I swear it will be his noble daughter. Go to your brother. He is a man of honor and sense. Tell him I withdraw the challenge; only he must send me some kind of an apology in behalf of his father which I can show to my Regensteiners. And now, gracious Gräfin, this dialogue has been overlong; you would do well to be setting homeward, the more as I cannot wisely escort you far."

She would have kissed my feet had I only suffered it.

"I will pray St. Anna, St. Elizabeth, and all the rest to bless you to-night. You are the noblest, most chivalrous ritter in the world. I knew you would be merciful. But this is a dreadful earth we dwell in; Aunt Thekla is right — there is no peace save in the convent, where one can try to please God all day long."

And with these very ill-connected sentences she was gone down into the trees, almost as suddenly as she had come. I stood shrugging my shoulders. I had been mortally insulted, and had suddenly forgiven the insult as meekly as a St. Francis, — and all for the tears of a superstitious, crying, pleading girl, as bereft of true wit and elegance as the pine stumps.

"Bah!" I cried, and spat vehemently. "A few more months in this place and I shall be bewitched and befooled every hour. Well — at Rome they are wise to depend on 'The Sins of the Germans' to fill the Pope's coffers. What a fearful and wonderful thing is this fear of hell fire!"

CHAPTER VIII

I HEAR JOHN TETZEL

MORITZ sent all possible apologies in behalf of his father. "An affair of the cups" explained everything to my castle-folk. The clouds so suddenly gathered as suddenly blew over. I visited no more at Schloss Blankenburg, but almost daily Moritz met me at a great oak betwixt our respective fortress mansions, and forth we rode on the hunt. The Graf wisely kept to himself. The abbess had returned to Quedlinburg. Lady Ilsa was with us often. A chameleon was she,—now the dignified, courtly dame who honored me merely by suffering me to ride decorously at her saddle-bow, now the merry-eyed girl who gave me the same familiar chatter she granted her brother, now the sedate and pious woman who told long stories of the blessed saints and the evil witches, pressed me as to the nature of "succubi and incubi," and asked with perfect seriousness "whether she did not have an entire vocation for the convent?" At Rome I had conceitedly thought that I comprehended womankind; but I did not then know Ilsa.

Life at the Regenstein was become, by this time, tolerable. Ever the northern beauty of the Harzland grew on me; the sniff of the pines, the long silences of the hills. I began to find the honest friendliness of my uncouth retainers more agreeable than the elaborate service of lips and gesture which Andrea bestowed. I even began to find a music in the German speech. The stubble on my chin was grown to a decent

length. I wore clothes after the somewhat loud and full-cut fashion of the country.

"Your noble Grace is become a right Harzlander like his sires," said Adolf, one day, approvingly.

Nevertheless, when summer passed into autumn, and I saw the rains destroying the glory of the greenwood, I concurred with Moritz when he suggested that I ride with him to Wittenberg. Ilsa had been asked thither for the winter to the home of her maternal aunt, the Freifau von Steinitz; and as for me, I would find congenial and advantageous company at the local court of the Elector of Saxony, the far renowned Frederick the Wise.

How we fared down from the Harzland into the rich valley of the Elbe, how by a detour we visited the free and wealthy city of Magdeburg, and were astonished at the elegance of its princely burghers, and how finally we must needs make another detour towards Berlin to visit an old military friend of my father's, I leave out as immaterial. After quitting our host's castle we found ourselves, late in October, traversing the sandy plain that forms the southern part of the Mark-gravate of Brandenburg. The country was poor, the peasants dwelling in wretched little mud villages, the castles to offer us hospitality few, and the inns intolerable. We therefore hastened over the last stages of the way to Jüterbog with all possible speed, being told that a cleanly inn and decent fare at last awaited us, and need we had of both.

While yet we were about two German miles¹ from the town, and upon a most solitary road, we were amazed at the number of wayfarers our cavalcade overtook — old men on their canes, round peasant women with children hanging at their skirts, and whole bands of sturdy wayfarers, usually carrying goodly bundles of provisions as if for a long journey. Occasionally we passed creaking ox-carts whereon a whole family

¹ About nine English miles.

were sitting in the straw. Once a company of wandering scholars ran up to us to beg "Charity for God's sake!" in very bad Latin. We were all mystified, until at a watering trough a trudging rascal, who called himself a mendicant friar on pilgrimage to the Swiss shrine of Eisedeln, gave the key.

"Whither go all these folk?" asked Moritz from his saddle; "to a shooting tournament?"

"To a holier sport than that, please your Lordship," spoke the fellow, holding out his hand for a groschen.

"Well, tell us, then."

"Why, the reverend Master Tetzl, His Holiness's own special Commissioner, will preach and sell the new plenary indulgences this afternoon before the church at Jüterbog."

"Indulgences?" I saw Gräfin Ilsa's pretty ears prick up like a rabbit's. "What do you mean?"

"Why, your Ladyship can learn for herself when she gets to Jüterbog. Not that noble folk like you have great sins upon your conscience, but still these are the most potent indulgences ever hawked. The Lord Pope's special granting, you know."

"What we heard of at Magdeburg," frowned Moritz to me, but Ilsa was all attention.

"Your Lordships would do well to hear Master Tetzl," ran on the glib rogue. "You see, he goes to Jüterbog because it is the nearest town to Saxony, the Elector having forbidden him to enter his dominions."

"Another proof the Elector is justly called 'the Wise,'" I remarked, signing to ride on. But from that moment Ilsa had lost interest in everything else, and questions from other wayfarers brought out abundance of information.

"Oh, yes, your Ladyship," said an old peasant, "we have travelled clear from Bitterfeld, my wife and I, to hear Master Tetzl. They say he sells a wondrous indulgence — if you have one, your sins are washed clean white; and they

avail equally well to get your friends out of purgatory if they have gone before you."

"Crafty rascal," I was muttering to Moritz. "I heard of this indulgence even in Rome. Half of the money *may* go to build St. Peter's church, but the other half, I take my oath, goes to the Fuggers, those Augsburg bankers who advanced the Archbishop of Mainz his 30,000 gulden to pay the Pope's fees for his confirmation: and now the Archbishop is recouping himself."

"And as for Tetzel," quoth Moritz, with an equal shrug, "he is a hang-dog Dominican of vile fame in these parts. Rumor makes him out as condemned for adultery at Innsbruck five years ago, and barely saved by the Elector of Saxony's pleading; possibly the story's unjust, but you can judge the man after you see him. At least, he has a front and a voice of brass — the noisy villain."

But my Lady Ilsa heard, or would hear, nothing of such innuendoes. After another pious wayfarer had suggested that one could probably buy an indulgence for some absent friend, I could ever see her giving the whip to her palfrey and leading us all.

"It's her father that's on her mind, poor lass!" spoke Moritz to me under his breath. "I know what you are thinking, and I think the same; but if for a few gulden we can get a scrap of paper that will make *her* a bit happier — who in the devil's name should make a face?"

And so we pressed onward. We saw the towers of Jüterbog, a little before noon, across the brown, sear grain fields of the advancing autumn. Solemn dark windmills were waving their long arms above the farmsteads. The squalid little thatched villages were pouring out their tow-headed northern peasantry, all headed for Jüterbog. At the gate of the small city and in the main street we could hardly win a way to the principal inn — despite vigorous laying about with our

riding whips. We found the 'Reichskanzler' a very endurable hostelry, and luckily the best rooms were not taken, but mine host bustled up to us while at dinner to inform "their Lordships that they had best hasten their repast if they wished to see the reverend Commissioner of Indulgences enter the city."

The inn naturally faced upon the chief square opposite the church. A convenient window was reserved for us, and quite at our ease we witnessed a sight which we were not to forget for many a long day. Only, through it all, I had one eye on the swarming street below, and one on Gräfin Ilsa, who sat flushed, eager, beautiful, as if expecting some kind angel to come down and bring a miraculous deliverance. And repeatedly I marvelled to myself at the fate which made the mad heretic and infidel of Messere Chigi's feast the silent witness of what now came to pass.

At first the market-place seemed a mere fair ground. Two husky peasants were wrestling in a ring; a juggler was showing a few poor tricks from the church steps; vendors of bright ribbons, little knives, and red cloth caps cried their wares; a swarm of thirsty folk were coming and going from the wine cellar under the Rathaus. Then of a sudden the great bell on high began its booming. The folk came thronging into the square from every alley, making the whole place a sea of heads with a narrow avenue up to the church door. Next the blowing of horns and the chanting of the *Te Deum* by many voices; and in streamed the procession. The local priests in their whitest surplices led, next the dark-gowned monks of the local convent, while altar boys ran at either side swinging the smoking censers; then the gravely gowned magistrates of the town, after them a vast herd of laymen, members of various religious brotherhoods, bearing many gay banners. These were followed by a multitude of school children, rosy and clean, and dressed in their

best, all singing a hymn in praise of the Blessed Virgin. Then a kind of trembling seized the crowd. Necks craned, hats came off, a great many fell upon their knees on the flagging.

"Give heed, Christians," a crier's voice proclaimed. "The Reverend Master Tetzel and the warrant of His Holiness!"

A young monk bore a great parchment on a purple velvet cushion, — the commission of the Pope to the indulgence vendor. A second monk bore a tall red cross whereon the papal arms were emblazoned; and then, walking alone, and turning from time to time to lift his hand unctuously to bestow benediction upon the awestruck multitude, came the Reverend Master Tetzel.

The organ rumbled from the church, the procession streamed into it, and as many of the less orderly multitude followed as could find room. They were gone long enough to say a brief mass, and then, just as Ilsa was showing every sign of impatience, the Commissioner emerged again, and with similar pomp took his stand upon a small pulpit erected near the portal, with the red papal cross above him, and at his right, — significantly enough — a stout, iron-bound chest, secured by several padlocks. Beside the chest I saw a well-groomed merchant's clerk whom I rightly suspected was the agent of the Fuggers, to make sure those worthy bankers received their share of the pious offerings.

Master Tetzel was a tall, full-necked Dominican who knew how to make his black robe fall in impressive folds. Later I discovered that his face was hard, cynical, and none too honest; but we saw him then only from across the market-place, whence his bull's voice easily carried. The harangue he uttered was evidently a well-tested article, approved by its effect on many similar audiences. He began by extolling the charity of the Pope, who deigned to bestow such peculiar graces upon the German people, a folk he preferred above all the rest of Christendom. As for the object for which they

were summoned to contribute their money, it was for the building of the Basilica of St. Peter, the holiest sanctuary in the world. But what, in any case, were a few miserable gulden beside the chance then and there for every one present to win eternal life for himself and for all his friends?

I cannot tell all his artful threatenings and persuadings, all his utterances about the vast treasury of good deeds accumulated by Christ, the Apostles, and manifold saints but now thrown freely at the disposal of any purchaser of indulgence. I will not deny he dropped words to the effect that a formal confession was necessary before the "blessed medicine" began its perfect effect upon the living, but it was very plain that he who paid the money would not find many difficulties in the shriving. As for the dead — now doubtless in purgatory — here was a marvellous chance to deliver them!

"I call on you all — great sinners, murderers, robbers, adulterers, to turn to God and receive this miraculous medicine which He in his mercy and wisdom has provided for your benefit. St. Stephen gave up his body to be stoned — his virtue is yours. St. Laurenz his to be burned, yours also. The martyrdom of St. Bartholomew is imputed to you again. And yet you — amongst whom even the most righteous is a miserable offender — will you not give one little gift of vile money to purchase eternal life?"

And then while women wept, and stolid peasants shook, he thundered the virtue of his indulgences touching the dead; and through it all I could see Ilsa's tense, white face leaning farther, farther from the balcony.

"Your parents and relatives, sinners before God even if righteous before men, are in the flames of purgatory. They are crying out to you, 'We are in bitterest torments; with a small alms you could save us, but you will not. We gave you birth, nourished you, and left you all our temporal goods;

yet such is your cruelty towards us that you, so able to make us free, suffer us to lie in the fire.'"

"Is the action of the indulgence swift and sure even in purgatory?" cried some voice from the front of the gaping multitude.

Tetzel clapped his powerful hands together. "Yea verily! By God and all his angels!

'The money in the strong box rings —
The ransomed soul to heaven upsprings!'

"I say unto you no words can describe the power and merit of these indulgences. Never before was such opportunity for sinful men. Yes! He who had been marvellously suffered to do foulest insult to the Holy Mother of God — pardon would be here for him!"

And then he threw his eyes upward and made the marketplace shake with his stentorian summons.

"Lo! Heaven is opened! When will you enter if not now? Oh, senseless men, too hardened to appreciate such a bestowal of divine grace! How hard-hearted! If you will not think of yourselves, think at least of your parents, your father, your mother!" (Poor Ilsa's head went down upon her hands. Moritz put his manly arm about her, while I discreetly looked upon Tetzel. The orator swept on to his turgid climax.) "Thus I have spoken. The hour of mercy passes. The hour of awful judgment will be at hand. At that last judgment I am free, you responsible; for I tell you that if you have but one garment, sell it; sell it — rather than fail to gain such a wondrous grace!"

By this time men and women were down on the stones, moaning, beating their breasts, and crying out for all manner of mercy. Tetzel stepped deliberately from the pulpit; and a lieutenant of milder voice explained the practical details. There was a scale of prices for the indulgence based

upon the rank of the purchaser and the enormity of his guilt. Wives were advised to get indulgences for their absent husbands, who need know nothing about them in advance. There were priests ready in the church to hear confessions, and as soon as these had been gone through (and very perfunctorily, I may add) and the money paid, the indulgence was granted; while of course for souls in purgatory only the money would be required.

Soon a swarm as of bees was around the tables set now on the church steps, where several of the Commissioner's clerks busily filled in the blank indulgence papers; and you could hear the steady chink, chink of good coin into the chest. Master Tetzel had known his audience. He was reaping an abundant harvest for his holy employers and the Fuggers.

Half amused and half disgusted I turned away, when I saw Gräfin Ilsa rising.

"My purse; brother," she was saying; "I must go to the church."

I let Moritz remonstrate with her, uttering, myself, not a word. He availed nothing. Away she went to the church with her two maids, both about as scared and fluttering as herself; and we sat gnawing our lips and thinking hard thoughts till they came back again. As imagined, the Gräfin had been as a lamb among wolves to the reverend indulgence sellers. She had purchased "graces" for herself, for her brother, for her departed mother, and above all for her father. The crafty vendors, at once divining her gentle blood, had pried out her true rank and taxed her ten good gulden per document, as the tariff duly provided for "abbots, great prelates, counts, barons, and others of the higher nobility," for each of the precious letters. And there these letters were, most handsomely engrossed and sealed; whilst over her father's the little lady poured especially, and read aloud to us the solemn words.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on thee, Eckbert von Blankenburg, and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy sufferings. And I in virtue of the apostolic power granted unto me, absolve thee from all ecclesiastical censures, judgments, and penalties that thou mayest have incurred, however great. I efface all the stains of weakness and traces of shame. I remit the pains thou wouldest have had to endure in purgatory. I reincorporate thee in the communion of the saints, so at the moment of death the gate of paradise shall be opened to thee. And if thou shouldest live long, this grace continueth unchangeable, until the time of thy end."

"But," asked Moritz, none too enthusiastically, "must not our father go to confession before this indulgence becomes potent for him?"

"There was, indeed," admitted Ilsa, "a little said about a confession, but the Commissioner's clerk was very certain the main thing was the ten gulden. In any case, I can get Father Augustin to absolve my father, and all will be well."

"So, dear Gräfin," I said, I fear a little cynically, "you are quite satisfied of the strength and validity of these holy indulgences?"

"You saw the Pope's arms; you heard the preacher's words. It *must* be all true, else whom in God's world are we poor maids to believe?"

"Don't press her," growled Moritz in my ear; "drowning men will clutch at straws. For a little while she is being made very happy."

But as for me, my blood had nigh boiled over. That night, after the Gräfin and her brother had retired, I went down into the great common room of the inn, and there in a roaring company, cans clinking and foul jests going about full merrily, was his Reverence the Pope's Commissioner. I strode straight into the herd of wandering friars, discharged lanz-knechts, guzzling burghers, and up to the arm-chair where the Herr Preacher sat, with a fat, sly-eyed bar wench

hanging on his elbow. The sight of a man in the dress of a gentleman, and with a silver scabbard, made everybody put down his mug, and look sharply as I accosted the Commissioner.

"Magister Johannes Tetzel," spoke I clearly in Latin, standing before him, "I would speak with you."

"Welcome, welcome to your Lordship," the fellow slipped his flagon back to the woman and turned on me an eye as wordly wise as a rat's; "your nobility would purchase one of my matchless and infallible soul medicaments?"

"Not for all the world. Now hear me, Herr Papal Commissioner. I have perforce to-day listened to your sermon, and very vile it was. I am a layman, but I know as much theology as full many gorging clerks; and I say to your face, you are befooling these honest folk out of their poor money as foully as did ever a Jew with his usury."

The reverend domine flashed out of his seat like a bursting petard. His face was red as a beet.

"A million fiends! What have we here — a Turkish infidel? Am I not the lawful Apostolic Commissioner and Inquisitor into Heretical Pravity? Do you want utter anathema and the major excommunication?"

"Pish," I responded, deliberately banging my hilt upon the table, "I have lived in Rome. I'm not a silly girl to be scared by big words and hell fire. I say to you, you have exceeded your commission. Debatable as are all the Pope's indulgences, you have preached them in a manner your betters never authorized."

"Now, by St. Dominic," sneered the preacher, recovering a little of his poise, "who are you, my brave ritter, to swagger in here, and talk like a bishop? If you *have* been in Rome, you will remember the saying there current, 'God desireth not the death of any sinner, but that he should *pay* and live'; and as for my instructions, I have followed them so excellently

well that my chest is exceeding heavy, and that is all the Archbishop of Mainz or the Pope are likely to ask about."

"Or the banking house of the Fuggers," I flung back, casting an eye upon the spruce agent who sat by his wine in a corner. "Verily, Magister Tetzal, I hear that at your north country festivals there is a prize to the champion telling the greatest lie. By all the devils in hell I swear you are full victor!"

All this cut and thrust brought nowhere, and I was a fool to have believed that I could have accomplished anything. I was too furious to argue calmly, and Tetzal was beyond all argument. At least the reverend rascal heard his sins set before him in no mincing language. At last realizing that our colloquy was passing into a mere badinage of coarse epithets and empty threats, I had the wisdom to turn on my heel.

"No doubt, my venerable scoundrel," I cried, as a last volley, "you have never heard of the learned Italian Masuccio. Grow wise, then, hearing what he said of you friars. 'The best punishment for you would be for God to abolish purgatory and the fear thereof; then you would get no more alms and must go back to your spades.'"

"Heresy! Blasphemy!" roared the Commissioner and a dozen satellites. So I left them, calling for their "sleeping drinks" and making the dice rattle.

I went to bed in the most impious mood imaginable. The affair had confirmed me in my long standing suspicion that what most men called religion was a noxious lie.

"Curses on the faith that makes a creature like Ilsa — born to dwell in the sunlight — live out her days in terror and gnawing woe! If god I must have, let him be the Zeus of Plato and Aristotle." And with such unholy thoughts, presently I went to sleep.

CHAPTER IX

I HEAR MARTIN LUTHER

THE next day we journeyed on to Wittenberg, through the white birch forests and seared autumn grain fields, the villages still keeping their poverty-stricken character, and our company overtaking again many plodding companies, this time all headed away from Jüterbog. Hardly a person but bore his or her little scroll signed by Master Tetzl. But although the Gräfin would hear never a word, Moritz and I were pleased to catch not a little adverse comment upon the proceedings of yesterday.

"Your Lordships doubtless understand, but I do not," grumbled a gray old farmer at a tavern where we stopped for beer. "I have bought my paper, but I can never see why the dear God so loves money that for lack a few groschen He would leave a soul in everlasting torment. Best no doubt to be on the safe side, — but I cannot make it out."

"Nor I," spoke a younger companion, "why the Lord Pope — who, they say, is a most charitable man — does not out of pure love empty the whole of purgatory, since he is willing to free so many souls just for such a trifle as a gift for a church?"

"Hush, Grundold," urged a third, cautiously; "don't talk against the reverend commissioner. Priests have ears everywhere."

"We will never betray your gossip, good folk," said I, quitting them: "but we have no answer to your questions."

Others however were more complacent, and I heard one

rogue boasting how he had committed a robbery four months since and his conscience now felt "white as a new dropped lamb." All of which made me think more hard thoughts of Master Tetzl.

Shortly before noon we saw lifting above the plain to westward the tall round tower of the "Castle Church" of Wittenberg, and beside it the lower twin towers of the "Parish Church," and presently the capital town of Electoral Saxony spread out its walls and houses before us. Often have I recalled that first sight of the little city wherein my whole life, yes, and the whole life of half of wide Christendom, was to be run as through a crucible, and changed — changed so that only the shadow of our old uncouth selves remained. I remember the feeling of disappointment when on passing the gate I saw the muddy, ill-paved streets, where lean hens and dirty geese were picking in the piles of offal. I saw too the long, ill-built street of ugly wooden houses, the only thoroughfare of the city. Even as we came under the gate we met two drunken students belaboring one another with sturdy cudgels, while a ring of more sober comrades stood by, urging them merrily to "lay on!"

"A scurvy hole," I commented to Moritz, and he cheerfully replied that Wittenberg was reputed "the most drunken town in Germany," adding, however, that since the establishment of the new University things had been somewhat on the mend.

Luckily we found the town a little less obnoxious as we proceeded west along the Collegien Strasse, and at last before the sombre, unpretending Schloss we found the palatial home of the elector's castellan, the Freiherr von Steinitz, who with his noble lady granted us worthy hospitality. It was my first sight of a German patrician's city house, and the display of gold and silver plate, the rare Venetian glass, the costly tapestries, the paintings by Memling, the engravings by Dürer, the rich massive furniture covered with delicate

carving, — all these told of a taste and elegance worthy of the best palazzo in Rome.

The Prince Elector was absent from the city, but I was assured there were gentlemen at the Schloss well worth my acquaintance and company. As for Gräfin Ilsa she was happy as a bird in her aunt's enlivening society, and there were soon half a dozen young ritters pranked out in their best, and hanging around the Freiherr's great hall all day for a chance to have a few words with her, and show her the sights of Wittenberg. They were a little disgusted, perhaps, to learn that she was most interested in the marvellous collection of saints' relics assembled by the pious elector at the Castle Church. She told us that evening about all the wonders she had met, — five thousand infallible and genuine relics of the holy ones, including some skin from the face of St. Bartholomew, drops of the milk of Mary, a piece of the rod of Aaron, and some straw whereon the Christchild lay.

"Five hundred thousand years indulgence just for visiting them," she concluded. "Oh! if I could only bring my father!"

The good-hearted Freifrau here tactfully changed the subject. Her husband, however, and certain of the 'Honorability'¹ who joined us at the board, spoke with veiled bitterness of the recent mania for indulgences.

"Tetzel is a greater knave than Judas," concluded the testy Freiherr; "all honest men are enraged at him — but who will bell the cat?"

Who indeed? For I considered his words as prophetic when, a little later in the evening, as we sat listening to a recital of the recent troubles betwixt Kaiser Maximilian and the princes, a visitor was introduced, requesting to see none other than myself.

"Dr. Andreas Carlstadt," said the Freiherr as inter-

¹ Heads of the City Council.

mediary; "one of the most learned and honored of our University professors."

The newcomer was a man of smallish stature, dark and sunburned, with over-sharp features; he had a harsh voice, and I judged a warm temper, though not lacking in learning and intellectual ability. Having ascertained my identity he drew his fur-lined doctor's gown about him and gave me a profound reverence; then proceeded to ask questions. I was familiar with Rome? Yes. Recently come thence? Yes. I had seen Tetzels at Jüterbog? Yes. Good, then, would I deign to do him a favor?

"What was it?"

The professor cleared his throat. He was evidently on a delicate mission. Had I ever heard of Dr. Martin Luther of Wittenberg University? I had, — a tolerably well-known preacher and scholar. My visitor then opened his business.

"Then, very noble Graf, I am come to you to crave a favor. His Lordship the Freiherr will bear testimony to this Dr. Martin's piety, sincerity, and zeal."

"Gladly," assented the gentleman warmly; "never do I miss the parish church when he preaches. My wife and most of Wittenberg call him everything but a saint; and better, he is a right manly man. *He* is no sailor in the ship with Tetzels."

"Ah!" interposed Carlstadt promptly; "your Lordship has said it. He is no friend of Tetzels. The tale of the preaching at Jüterbog has come to his ears, and has driven him almost frantic. This morning, being filled up with stories of the indulgence hawking, he shut himself in his study at the Augustinian convent, and all day has wrought on certain theses — propositions, your Lordships understand, — which he proposes for public debate. In them he assails Tetzels rightly but rashly. 'God willing,' he vowed when I remonstrated, 'I will make a hole in his drum!' But that is

not the worst. I have had a glimpse of the theses. They contain many things that Tetzl and his Dominican friends can wrestle into downright heresy, even attacks upon the power and prerogative of His Holiness the Pope."

"Your Dr. Martin must be a very Hercules to rouse that Cerberus," I threw out, smiling.

"The Graf does not know him. He would walk to the stake as cheerfully as to dinner, if only he felt that plain duty summoned him."

"Well," I rejoined, "that being the case, worthy Dr. Carlstadt, what can I do for you?"

"Do? Your Nobility can do everything. You are a man of learning. You are acquainted with Rome. You understand the sensitiveness of the Papal Court to all innuendoes. Go to Dr. Luther; remonstrate. Point out it is useless to dip one's fingers in Roman ink. Urge him to let Tetzl bray himself silent. Your influence as an experienced man of affairs will be great. Were I not the friend of this truly pious and learned young friar, I would not urge this; but 'tis a mighty grief to see a man who could even hope for a bishopric throw away all chance of promotion by a few Latin theses rashly published."

I demurred at first, raising various objections. But the Fraiherr reënforced Carlstadt's petition.

"He is indeed a pious and eloquent young friar, with a notable career before him. We have none too many such in these days. He must not be blighted by the Dominican's claws so early. Besides, he may breed great scandal for the University. Go to him, then, in heaven's name, and talk him out of it."

Thus it befell that, after more protesting, I consented.

* * * * *

It had been agreed I could accomplish most if I went upon my mission alone. The lackeys of the Freiherr lighted me

down the long miry street to the Augustinian convent, which, by night, I could only see was a tall, massive building near the eastern gate. A knocking brought a young lay-brother to the door, who turned out to be Dr. Luther's famulus.¹ On explaining my business I was escorted up a dark, winding staircase into a large study, and left alone while the fellow went to hunt up his professor.

Two candles on a broad oaken table in one corner shed a fitful light over the wide apartment. I saw a tall, green-tiled stove in the opposite corner. The floor was uncarpeted. On one wall hung a well-carved wooden crucifix, but I missed the display of crosses and saints' pictures I had expected in the room of such a friar. Two or three solid, uncushioned chairs were by the table; beside the brass candlesticks was a battered pewter mug and also a number of books, the bindings worn and thumbed. I noted particularly a Plautus and a Vergil — favorite authors clearly; a copy of Erasmus's new edition of the Greek Testament, and a Vulgate open at the 118th psalm,² also the *Postilla*, a learned commentary upon the Bible by De Lyra.

Here was the room of no snoring monkish idler, manifestly; and as surely, one could say, that of no cultured churchly sybarite. Interested by the whole aspect and atmosphere, I was bending farther over the books when I heard a firm step.

"Welcome, my Lord Graf," a voice was saying heartily. The man I sought had entered.

In the candle-light when first I saw him I could hardly distinguish his features. I saw a man in the white Augustinian tunic. He seemed a person of a little over middle height, his body very lean — by fasting, I imagined — his head widely tonsured, leaving merely a dark ring of hair. I could see enough of the face to tell that it was rugged and in-

¹ A kind of half-assistant, half disciple of a German professor.

² A favorite psalm of Luther's.

terlined, but not old; distinctly a peasant countenance; yet it was the uncouthness of strength, not of ignorance. Then out of it all flashed eyes so bright, so keen, that the word of condescending salutation halted on my lips. I removed my cap silently. Kings, emperors, popes I have met, but never one of whom first instinct spoke as of that tonsured monk, "A master."

"I have the honor to meet Dr. Luther?" I asked, with a diffidence not my wont; and he, looking on me frankly, extended a wide hand. His voice, clear as a deep bell, added to the influence of his eyes.

"Martin Luther, Augustinian friar, lecturer on theology, preacher to the convent, vicar to the priory, pastor to the parish, — and generally struggling with flesh and blood, the devil, and the world. See what an idle man I am! and now how may I serve you?"

Very diffidently — I could have faced the Prince Elector with greater ease — I explained my errand, Carlstadt's fears, my own experience, and the friendly intent of my mission. Dr. Luther proffered me a chair, and threw on the table a small pile of papers, motioning for me to peruse them.

"Oh! my brave Carlstadt," he cried in broad Saxon, whilst I examined. "All fears to-day, hot flame to-morrow! Whither will your weasel courage jump next? A merry day for the Church and poor Christians when all we theologians are of your fine boldness! Well, your Lordship, do you find in those black marks on white sheets anything very heretical?"

"Magister Doctor," said I, trying once more to use my best Florentine Latin, and beginning already to dislike my task; "I am not learned in the niceties of theology; but in these ninety-five theses here, which I gather are propositions concerning Tetzel's indulgences that you wish to propound for public debate, I fear are certain matters which you would

wisely moderate here and there, lest you raise greater scandal for the Church than that which you so piously endeavor to quell."

"Moderate? How many, your Lordship?" His hand fell vehemently on the table.

"Why not a few, to speak the candid truth. For instance, you say 'Every Christian, truly contrite, has full remission from both punishment, and guilt, even without letters of indulgence.' 'Christians should be taught that he who gives to a poor man, or lends to needy man, does better than if he bought pardons'; or, more especially, 'We affirm that Papal pardons cannot take away even the least of venial sin, as regards its guilt.' There are a great many more in like vein. I am bound to tell you, reverend Doctor, such utterances are exceedingly unwise."

"Unwise? And does your Lordship tell me you approve of Tetzel's blasphemies and filching from our miserable bewitched peasantry? God forbid!"

"God forbid, say I likewise. I myself have told the rascal to his face all that I think of him. But, learned Sir, it is plain you do not understand what troubles I would spare you. If Tetzel's were the only back to smart, I would full merrily cry 'Lay on!' But who is Tetzel? A pawn on the great Church chess board. In attacking him whom do you attack? His masters, Albrecht, Prince-Archbishop of Mainz, the great banking house of the Fuggers, — and last, but not least, His Holiness himself."

"The Archbishop and the Pope? The Graf is jesting. Heaven keep me from thinking so foully of them! Tetzel exceeded his mandate in his preaching. On hearing my complaints they will silence him."

"Tetzel exceeded his mandate? Yes. So I told him at Jüterbog. And I will tell you his answer. 'My chest is exceeding heavy, and that is all the Archbishop of Mainz and

the Pope are likely to ask about.' And the artful fox is wholly right."

The Augustinian had sprung from his chair, and began pacing the room with quick, nervous strides. He twisted and untwisted his long powerful arms.

"The Pope and the Archbishop? It cannot be! It cannot be! No little theses of mine can disturb such great men. Can a sparrow destroy an elephant? At worst they will merely ignore my charges, and let Tetzal weave his own rope to hang himself."

"I fear the learned Doctor is wrong," I said; "allow me to play the prophet. If you publish those theses against Tetzal, in six months your name will be blazoned all over Christendom as little better than a heretic."

I thought I saw the friar's face turn pale, but he only paused, crossed himself hurriedly, and muttered "Impossible."

"By no means impossible. It is because, even in these brief moments, I come to take an interest in your Reverence's honor and welfare which I cannot explain even to myself, I urge this again. Believe me, I know Italy and I know Rome. I am no fox-hunting northern ritter, better at brawling than at books. I have learned my Latin at Florence, my Greek at Padua. Hardly six months since I sat at cards with His Holiness. I speak with knowledge. Delve in philosophy and abstract theology as you will. The Pope is tolerant. He permits any subtle message to the learned. But these theses here will speak like booming cannon to the myriad laity. They will dry up one of the richest sources of Roman revenue. As you love a venerable name, honor, churchly promotion, do not touch the Pope's, or the Pope's lieutenant's, money bags."

"A question?" the other stood straight before me and held me fixed by the power of his wonderful eyes.

"I will answer," I replied uneasily.

"Tell me, then, Graf von Regenstein: do you urge me to suppress these theses because what I say in them is untrue, or because what I say in them is unwise?"

"Unwise, utterly unwise."

"Then Tetzl must continue to play the Simon Magus with his lecherous villainy?"

"For a while, yes. One must endure him now, as one bears the plague. He is mortal."

"But meantime he will continue to hoodwink and plunder from thousands?"

"I presume so."

The friar seemed to grow a foot taller. Thunderbolts seemed springing out of his countenance. Unconsciously he lifted his hands on high, and raised his voice as in the pulpit before his people.

"Oh! dear Lord Jesus Christ: when Thou didst die for sinful me upon the cross, shall I draw back from my sworn task when Thy word is being defied, Thy little children led astray, Thy holy gospel brought into contempt, and the devil's wolves and hirelings are raging within the fold, and all because this noble Graf here says it will blast my chance of worldly greatness, and even expose me to the slanders of evil men. Oh! let rather this poor carcass of mine, which folk call Martin Luther, go straight to the scorching flame, than that I show such contempt for all Thy love, sacrifice, and bloody sweat."

Never in my life — and though not old, I had lived through many a strange scene — had I experienced the sensations I did when that trumpet call sounded in my ears. It came like a blast from another world, speaking a tongue I knew not, though every word I understood. For here was a man speaking good Latin, and with learned books on his table. He was no bead-counting, unwashed Italian hermit run after by

an adoring country-side. No crack-brained lay enthusiast. No smugly hypocritical mendicant seeking an alms. And behold! he was speaking of "the Love of Christ" as of a very intimate and wholly tangible thing, and meeting my cry of "expediency" with an argument before which all my skilfully wrought reasonings would fly back blunted. And yet I would not retire thus. I also rose from my seat.

"Your Reverence speaks eloquently, but your heart masters your head. Granted your willingness to make great sacrifice, you must in any case be sure your sacrifice will achieve its end. I tell you, therefore, in all fairness, I believe you will be speedily silenced, and your memory condemned."

"St. Stephen was silenced. That was no reason to him for denying his Lord, though no doubt the Jews condemned his memory."

"But your Reverence can do vast good in a long life if you will only be discreet to-day. Public gossip makes you a bishop ere very long. Your piety is famous."

"Fools will babble folly. My piety is but as filthy rags. A noble bishop would I make to my people, when I bought the mitre at the price of my soul!"

"Believe me," I said deprecatingly, "I have no brief for Master Tetzl. Haste is never a good councillor. If you will but consider carefully you will find a thousand reasons for caution. As Aristotle says —"

Again I struck sparks from his eyes.

"Quote to me no Aristotle, Sir Graf, as to my duty. Quote God's word—but nothing pagan." But he checked himself; "Ei!" with a laugh he continued, "who am I to bandy proud words with your gracious Lordship? Be seated again; hear me out patiently, then call me a mad fool all you will."

So I sat, hearkening while he paced the room, talking very fast.

"Peasant born I am, and peasant I am like to remain in speech and thought till God orders otherwise. Many a day as a boy have I seen my mother toiling under a load of sticks too heavy for her weak back. I have been schoolboy at Eisenach, student at Erfurt, and then friar at Erfurt and Wittenberg, but I am peasant still. Pardon therefore my blunt uncourtly speech. My tongue is a bow that sends arrows straight at the mark; your Lordship will forgive me."

"No more apologies. Proceed, I beg you."

"In years past I have gone down all the paths of monkery, — fast, flagellation, vigils, long prayers; I have tried them all. If, as Paul would say, 'I could glory after the flesh,' even I, sinful Martin Luther, could claim to be pious, righteous, holy. And yet, I say to you, Graf von Regenstein, my monk's merits were as nothing, nothing. My soul was in exquisite torment. I feared hourly the pangs and anguish of hell. My righteousness I knew was but as worthless dross. Then — no matter how — it came to me that it was not by the merits of Martin the Sinner but of Christ the Righteous that I would be justified. That all the outward things men call 'holy' are 'holy' only so far as they are tokens of that inner light and hope within. My soul was born again, and unto peace. And with that peace which the world cannot give came keen desire to pass my hope to my fellow-men also."

He paused an instant, and asked, "You do not catch my drift?"

"Not wholly, Magister Doctor," replied I, following his paces with my eyes, fascinated.

"Good, then. I will explain. God has given me some slight gifts as a preacher and teacher to stir the hearts of men. Here in Wittenberg I have, week after week, given my message, 'not fasts, not pilgrimages, not indulgences, but the pure heart, the humble mind, will buy the way to the kingdom of

heaven.' Nay more; zealous friends have thrust upon me the honors of the doctorate. And as doctor of theology I have sworn ever to expound and defend the truth. And now what has come to pass?" He struck his hands together with his increasing passion. "Tetzel! Fox, ass, chattering ape, mountebank! I leave God to judge his soul! Task enough it is to acquit mine own. But he has come to Jüterbog, as close as he might to this my own town and people. My Wittenbergers, whom I have chided for their sins, and urged to repentance, come home to me boasting their indulgence sheets and their self-righteousness. And I know, and you Sir Graf know, and Carlstadt knows, and all honest and learned men know it is vile deceit and fiends' villainy. And yet you and Carlstadt still cry 'peace, peace,' when if I should hold my peace surely the very stones would cry out to shame my unfaithfulness."

Never in my life did I return to an argument with greater reluctance. Indeed, I own that I was mightily inclined to rejoin, "Go, then, in your sublime folly. Earn martyrdom, and some day even this world will bless you!" But I was more resolved than ever not to see an honest man ruined by his own virtues.

"Learned Doctor," answered I, "in eloquence I cannot match you. The nobility of your preaching I do not doubt. Yet even a righteous and rightful champion does not charge in the lists rashly. Tetzel is but a cloud in the ecclesiastical firmament. The wind will scatter him. Long after his indulgences have been tattered I trust you will preach to the good folk of Wittenberg, and lead them to your way of truth. But how will you preach to 'your Wittenbergers' when your case comes before the stern twelve judges of the Papal Rota, after you have gone to Rome for your trial? You may never see Wittenberg and Germany more. Even martyrdom comes best, when it comes amongst one's own people."

Again he halted. I thought I detected the least hesitancy when he resumed his paces.

"Behind the Rota is the Pope," he answered. "I have heard Leo is a very kindly man."

"Kindly? even so, as I have experienced, but his kindness is for his associates, — artists, poets, boon companions. Consider what manner of man he really is, — his experience in your manner of holiness. Tonsured when a boy of seven, too young to conceive the meaning of his sacred vows; ever immersed in worldly affairs; more concerned with French alliances than with the betterment of the Church; continually in debt, so that 500,000 ducats per year still leave him crying 'poverty.' Around him is a swarm of ever hungry and begging bishops and cardinals. He is full of expensive schemes, from building St Peter's church to conquering the Duchy of Urbino. And you — reverend Doctor, will be chargeable with one great crime; namely, you have lessened His Holiness's revenues. Deny the Blessed Trinity if you will; blaspheme the Holy Mother; call St. Paul a pagan and St. Peter a Mohammedan. All these you may do, and in the end find your lot a milder one. His Holiness will probably never pass upon your appeals. You will never find the money to bribe your way to an interview with even a powerful cardinal. The Vatican will speak once. You will be crushed."

"Do not exaggerate," interposed the friar, I thought somewhat quailing at my onset. "Never will I believe the Pope is what you say. Yet even then my blast will be a mere puff on a horse-trough. Tetzel will fume a little, perhaps a few of his betters will gnaw their lips. That will be all. If I diminish his bad gains but fifty gulden, I am satisfied."

"You forget, Magister Doctor," I rejoined, "that behind Tetzel is his whole powerful Dominican order, who will fly as one wolf-pack against the defamer of their fellow. The Dominicans are all-potent at Rome. They never forgive an enemy."

"And they call themselves *Christian* friars," he repeated bitterly, standing by the table.

"They will malign your motive, imputing it to jealousy that your own order was not given the indulgence hawking."

"Men like Tetzal will do anything" he assented gloomily.

"Then, my dear Doctor Luther," I cried, resolving to strike while the iron seemed hot, "I have convinced you. The theses are unwise. Leave Tetzal to his sins. They will punish him. See — I will burn the papers in the candle."

As I held out my hand, the packet was seized from it by force irresistible. Over me stood the friar, all transfigured by his passion.

"No! — while God rules in heaven! Let my right hand forget her cunning, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, let my poor body crumble to ashes in the flame, — but I will do that to which my Master summons me. When I set pen to paper I had not dreamed of all this you tell. But shall I be bold in the morning, and craven at nightfall? Not so. This is God's battle. And if He must be crucified afresh, thrice blessed am I if counted worthy to suffer with Him! Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but I will remember the name of the Lord, our God!"

The room was very still for a moment. I rose awkwardly and took my cap.

"Reverend Doctor," I said stiffly, moving towards the door, "I leave you. I have no other arguments. I could have refuted you out of Aristotle, Plato, or Aquinas, but not out of the Psalter. And I pray one prayer — that all whereof I have warned may prove forever untrue."

But as I was going out, he came over to me, and with a familiarity impossible to resent laid his hand with honest brotherly touch upon my shoulder.

"Oh, dear young Graf," said he, lapsing out of Latin into Saxon; "forgive my bluntness. My heart is moved for you.

Truly I fear you have been in Italy, where a 'bon Christian,' as they say, of our old German honesty and piety is utterly despised. Somehow your manner tells me the word and love of Christ is not the thing most precious in your sight. Oh! seek humbly for a new and better mind, — be not Italian, but German; for whether Martin Luther lives or dies, the Fatherland will have need for all brave young nobles such as you."

How could I answer this? The whole interview had been one of strange sensations.

"Dear Doctor," I said, with churlish simplicity, "be sure I shall remember all you say."

* * * * *

Once back at the Steinitz mansion, the Freiherr inquired the success of my errand.

"I have failed absolutely," I replied. "I have battered my head against a stone wall. But," I added, "your friar Martin is the noblest fool in Germany. Doomed to be silenced, probably to be burned: I admire and honor him still!"

CHAPTER X

THE HAMMER STROKES

LONG afterward I heard the story that on the night of October 30th of that year of grace, 1517, while the Elector Frederick of Saxony tarried at Schweinitz (a goodly distance from Wittenberg) he dreamed a dream, which in the morning he said "he could not forget, though he lived a thousand years." A monk there had been, a son of Paul the Apostle, writing upon the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, and in letters so large they could be read clear in Schweinitz, and using a goose-quill of such a length that it reached to Rome, pierced there the ear of a lion, so that it roared with pain, and then struck the triple crown of the Pope, so that it nigh toppled from his head.

I do not pass on the truth of this story. Let every man be his own judge from the things which followed. I only know that I awakened that morning after a troubled sleep, — somewhat interrupted by roistering students in the street, — and lay long on my host's great feather bed. I was very ill at ease. The interview of the preceding evening had shaken my self-complacency utterly. Here was I, Walter von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein, or Di Palaestro, as you wished, accounted young, high born, rich, with a thousand puissant friends, with any fortune short of a dukedom open to me, a master fencer and dancer, learned in all that the Hellenes and Latins could give me from Thales to Hermes Trismegistus, able to write Italian sonnets and Latin orations, to criti-

cize a picture, to defend a philosophy — and yet I was profoundly dissatisfied with this 'myself', and must needs ask the reason? And the answer presently came — that it was because since I had come to Germany, I had met two persons, — a mountain maiden and more lately an Augustinian friar. They had taught me that there was another world of moral and spiritual values wherein I had not so much as entered. Gräfin Ilse had perhaps only reached the threshold of that new Empire; and pitiful indeed were her pains and stumblings whilst she tried to enter in. Martin Luther had long since passed inside, and what he had said to me sounded as strange words, — tales by a traveller from the far Antipodes, telling of things he had seen, but which the common language was too feeble to paint to the unimagina-tive dwellers at home. The problem baffled me. Left thus without solution I fell into a kind of anger, not at these twain, but at myself. After all, I was not so wise as my conceit had told me. Well, then, years were still left to learn. Should I not attack this new problem in the same cold scientific spirit in which Messere Leonardo da Vinci attacked a new problem in engineering or architecture? And the solution could not fail too long in the finding.

That morning I roamed the long street of Wittenberg, half expecting to meet Dr. Luther, but he kept to his convent, and I began to suspect my arguments had carried their weight after all. It was a clear, cold, windy morning. I was glad of my cloak. Walking eastward from the town, I came to the mighty Elbe winding its swift course along the sear autumn plain. A few sail-boats were struggling with the wind and current, but most of the level brown country was deserted. Finding little of interest, I returned again to the town, where I found a procession winding along, escorting a newly capped graduate in his magister's gown and hood, surrounded by various University dignitaries, — all headed

for some friendly wein-stube and a merry afternoon. But just as the company disappeared in the tavern, I saw two monkish figures coming westward from the Augustinian Convent and headed for the Schloss-Kirche; and at sight of one of those figures I made haste to follow after them.

Dr. Martin Luther and a young disciple, the later famous Johann Agricola, were moving steadily down the Collegien Strasse. The doctor carried a hammer clutched firmly in his right hand; in his left flapped a packet of long white papers, — papers I had seen before. He went forward, with his head held high, a little defiantly, even. His eyes were brighter than ever; his shaven cheeks seemed pale. When he saw me, he wheeled and held out his hand with his hearty laugh.

"A fair day, noble Graf. And so you are ready to see me trample your fine words underfoot. Am I not a grateful fellow for all your trouble and courtesy!"

"I am pleased if you are pleased, dear Doctor," said I, while my fingers cracked under his grasp; "and as for my prophesies, I hope they all will blow away on this wind. The decision is yours, not mine."

"Ah!" cried the other, "too much imprudence displeases men: too much prudence displeases God. You will pardon again my uncourtly bluntness. And now let us on to the Schloss-Kirche."

Worthy Master Agricola explained to me as we went before that the door of the Castle Church was the regular bulletin board for the University. The others talked. I perforce lapsed into silence. Yet it seemed a very simple thing to do. I can see everything that happened as clearly as though it were yesterday.

I stood in the street under the lofty round tower while Doctor Martin, and Agricola (hanging a bit timidly behind), strode up to the side door of the Schloss-Kirche. We were

near the gate. A produce cart pulled by two brown dogs yoked along with a brown country maid, rattled by, dimming the hammer strokes. Three jaunty students halted to cast glances at the girl, pulling away at their young mustaches, and I heard "At the Black Eagle to-night; smacking beer there, pretty women." A young pig slipped from his sty outside the gate, ran past, grunting, with his owner's son in angry chase. Old Willy, the blind church beggar, shuffled up to me, rattling the pfennigs in his pewter mug, and not to be denied another copper. The keen breeze would send the Doctor's papers flying, yet he pounded away doggedly, reaching to Agricola for more nails, making every corner fast, while his black cassock flapped in the wind. Then he stepped back, and slipped the hammer in a pocket. Willy wandered back into the church. The pig was chased out of the gate. The students, anxious for the latest academic notice, drew nigh the papers. Three necks craned: craned yet further. No ordinary announcement of allocutions, evidently.

"Jesu-Maria!" I caught the mutter; and behold! two more had joined them, then a third, and three others. And ere one could think it, twenty seemed conning the Latin upon that church door, while others were swarming like bees out of every tall gabled house; out of every beer and wine cellar. And like bees went the buzzing of their voices.

I saw the priests of the parish church coming; I saw the golden-chained and bearded ritters of the schloss; I saw also the venerable burgomaster. Dr. Martin was turning quietly away. Men were as yet too amazed to question him. A little firmer were those strong lips; a little deeper seemed the glint in his eyes: but he was calm, apparently triumphant.

"Dear Doctor," I said, "you should be satisfied. You have awakened the dragon. Now if you are St. George, you will slay him."

"I shall try, God helping me." That was all he said; again however, his hand went out, and again we clasped, I think even harder than before.

"You are a brave man, Dr. Martin," I said, "and may the heaven you know so well give you full courage."

But here Carlstadt and another professor swept up to him with long faces, and hurried him thence, deep in talk; nor did I see him again that day.

* * * * *

And so it began. A windy street, a few long strips of paper, twelve firmly planted nails, a group of feather-brained students, — the deed brave and holy that was to shake the world. The commonplace act of a peasant-born monk protesting against what he deemed a wrong. "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord."

But how could I know it then? For the moment I was sorely troubled in heart, having seen a brave and honest man do what I deemed a hopelessly imprudent thing.

* * * * *

That night began a sound in Wittenberg that was never to cease, while Leo at Rome and all his cardinals must needs hold council long and late — the clang of the printing press spreading Dr. Luther's theses to all the world. Written in Latin they were speedily turned into German. They went in every merchant's bale, every pedlar's pack, north, south, east, west. In fourteen days they were in every corner of Germany; in a month they had gone to the ends of Christendom; "as though," said a chronicler of that which came to pass, "the angels were the postmen." And everywhere men learned and men ignorant talked thereof, some applauding, some condemning, but all attending. My prediction that the theses would prove a spark in the ecclesiastical magazine was verified sooner than I had dreamed.

Whether they would prove the ruin of their bold author,

time alone would tell. Carlstadt was still very dubious; Dr. Schurf, professor of law, expostulated vehemently with his colleague. From Hamburg came a letter from Albert Kranz, the famous historian. "You have truth on your side, brother Martin, but you cannot succeed. Poor monk, — get you to your cell, and cry 'O God have mercy upon me.'" From Erfurt, Dr. Luther's old university, came words of caution and cold cheer. So from some; but there were abundant words in another vein, — words of praise, comfort, approval. As for the friar, I can still see him, sitting at the great oak table in his convent chamber, and penning to Link, his prior at Erfurt, "If the work be of God, who shall prevent it? If it be of man, who shall promote it? Not my will, nor their will, nor our will, but *Thy* will, O Heavenly Father, be done."

So the clouds gathered, and we began to watch for the lightnings. With Dr. Luther I was often, very often; for there was a property about this man, which later I found was even in his theology; one either hated him, or loved him: one could have no half acquaintance. And what a man he was to know! Very human, very shrewd in worldly judgment, though sometimes touched by 'another worldliness' which was utterly disconcerting. He talked of himself, his student life at Eisenach and Erfurt, his later career as a friar, with naïve frankness. All Wittenberg called him blameless and pious, and so he surely was, observing all the fasts and enjoined abstinences of his order with an abnegation worthy of a St. Francis: yet on a feast day I can still see him, sitting behind the green stove, a mug of beer upon the table, and across his knees his mellow lute, strumming the strings with no clumsy fingers, and singing with deep, strong voice Latin student songs that were anything but Misereres. Very early I remarked his fondness for music, and his answer was characteristic.

"Yes, for where good music is, and an honest song, there the devil knows there is no spoil for him, and flaps his black wings away."

If my Roman companions had seen me daily walking, talking, dining with this Augustinian friar, who was already setting the world by the ears, I do not think they would have believed their own sight. And why was I so fascinated? I could not explain even to myself. Surely, I meditated, I had not become more convinced of this friar's theology — it was not proved valid because *he* believed it, and my Roman friends did not. Nor was he extraordinarily learned in the pagan classics, although I found him a very adequate Latin scholar, with a fair foundation in Greek. Nor was I greatly charmed by the social life in Wittenberg. The Steinitz family were delightful hosts, but I found few congenial spirits among the gentlemen at the Electoral Schloss.

Perhaps I dared not then to admit even to my own soul wherefore I let myself linger into the winter at this meanly famed and dull town of Wittenberg; yet in the after days I think I knew the reason, — Gräfin Ilsa was still in the city.

The young gräfin had unfolded as a rosebud under the sun in the genial warmth of her kinsfolk's cultured home, — so different from the tawdry savagery of Schloss Blankenburg. What to me was a small and stupid town, was to her a thriving and delightful metropolis. The gallant attentions of the official folk of the city were as charming and unaccustomed to her as they were commonplace to me. Less and less she seemed the grave nun, or the chattering mountain maiden, and more and more the noblewoman — the bearer of a long and honored, if slightly tarnished name. Stately and wise she seemed, and grew more so day by day, taking the pleasant homage as her rightful due, until I heard two under-captains swearing over their wine that "The Gräfin of Blankenburg was handsome as the new snow,

but, — holy St. Agatha! — equally cold to all their gallantries." A fact, however, which left them still her slaves.

Only to one person she never showed the well-moderated hauteur she displayed to the others. That person was myself. As far as I could discover, she regarded me as almost on an equality with her brother, — a kind of kinsman, or even cousin, to treat with all manner of confidences, without the need of any great thing to follow.

"Are we not both from the Harzland, and are not Blankenburg and Regenstein very near?" she said once, as in kind of apology for repeating the over-polite remarks of a certain Von Benningen at a recent skating party on the marshes by the Elbe.

"You are very happy in Wittenberg these days, Ilsa?" said I. (We had dropped formal titles between ourselves, long since.)

"Of course. It is all as a new world to me. Am I disloyal to the Harzland in preferring a winter here to the dreary mountain snow and cold? But I will tell you something. Listen close."

A disagreeable sensation seized me. She was about to confess an admiration for some more notable ritter than Von Benningen. Why, however, that should trouble me, I really did not understand.

"I am listening," I rejoined.

"Well, then. It is Dr. Martin's sermons. A letter from Aunt Theckla says she fears he is an unwise and heretical man, but I know even she must be wrong. I hear him every day he preaches in the Pfarr-kirche. I cannot understand all that he says, at least not to repeat it. But somehow his words are like the cool cloth that was laid on my forehead whilst I burned with the fever. I go away feeling so comforted!"

"And how comforted?" I asked, slightly amused.

"Why, he makes me feel that God is not so terrible and austere after all; that He is not so anxious to thrust folk into hell as to keep them out of it; that He is kind and pit-eous and loving, and understands that we cannot all do great works of holiness like the saints. The other day he even made me believe — if I *really* heard aright — that it was proper, nay best, to pray direct to the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to any intercessor or saint."

"Dr. Martin is an upright and eloquent man. I am glad he has brought you such comfort. But what do you gather as to saints' relics and good works?"

"Do you know, Walter," she made answer, "I do not think he says out all he believes. Yet I seem to gather that saints' relics are not bad, provided they are genuine, and are venerated only to recall the Christian virtues of the holy martyrs; as for good works, they must be performed as signs that the love of Christ is in our hearts, but not out of a selfish hope to buy our way to heaven."

"And you forgive him, then, for destroying your confidence in Master Tetzal."

Her usually mild eyes sparkled angrily. "Master Tetzal is a sinful and deceiving man. Do not name him before me."

Clearly, then, Dr. Luther had robbed the good Dominican of at least one noble customer, and I soon had reason to believe he had spoiled the trade of others. For after the first weeks of wavering I began to gather indubitable signs that if the bold Augustinian had awakened enemies he had also won countless friends. "He has said what we desired to say and dared not," — such was the burden of innumerable letters, and they came in ever increasing volume from every quarter of Germany; from ermined doctors, girded noblemen, elegant burghers, and from hundreds of poor but honest souls, until I began to wonder whether I had played the wise part, when like Cassandra, I had prophesied him evil.

Dr. Luther's correspondence grew to that of a bishop. Many a day when I came to solicit a stroll by the icy river he must needs put me off to toil on his letters with Spalatin, the Elector's high-minded confessor and spiritual counsellor, and fifty other learned men; or to write retorts pungent and pithy to the abusive counter-theses which Tetzels and his Dominicans had hasted to fling against him. "The more they rage, the more I go forward," he had asserted merrily, when friends spoke still of danger; and he challenged anybody charging him with heresy, and who wished "to chew iron and blow up rocks," to come to Wittenberg and argue it out, — a good table and a quiet lodging would be provided. So the storm beat, and I presently brought to Dr. Luther an Italian letter to the effect that the news of his utterance had spread even to Rome, where His Holiness, as yet unalarmed, looked on the whole matter as a mere squabble betwixt jealous monks. "Brother Martin," said the Pope, "has a very fine head!"

"And do you hold, Sir Graf," asked the friar, "to your prophecies of evil now?"

I fear I smiled with a superior wisdom. "Ah! Dear Dr. Martin. We will know a little better after the Pope understands that the indulgence money has ceased to flow in."

Thus we went through December very pleasantly, and were entering January, when of a sudden Ilsa's delightful sojourn ended, and mine with hers. A letter from Abbess Theckla was the bearer of ill-tidings. "Your father," ran the substance, "lies sorely ill at Blankenburg. Hasten back to him, or come too late." There was but one thing to do. Moritz would escort her. As for me, I had too long trenched on the hospitality of their kinsfolk. We had to set forth hurriedly, and I had only time for a brief word with Dr. Martin. Again he held my hand before the departure.

"Fare you well, dear Graf Walter, and the good God keep

you. And if poor Martin Luther has any word that may ring truly in your ears, remember you are a Christian and a knight. Seek God with a clear heart, and leave the rest to Him, and He will bring to pass that which is beyond all that you can ask or think."

A Christian and a knight? — I? — But not stopping to inquire into his injunction, I thanked him warmly. I promised to return in three months to Wittenberg, bringing him various books then at the Regenstein. Ilsa knelt for his blessing. Moritz and I respectfully veiled our caps. We rode out across the winter country, with the Wittenberg church spires long in sight. I was not to reënter the little Saxon city until after a momentous interval. As I rode westward, perhaps it was Dr. Martin's last words which recalled Dame Hedwig's prophecy, and I mused considerably thereon.

"Half of Northland,
Half of Southland,
Never gay
Till all of one land."

After all, which was it to be? Was I to prove German or Italian?

CHAPTER XI

I COME TO MAINZ

ON our travel we had abundant chances to measure popular opinion touching Dr. Luther. Whether on the road, or halting for dinner at the inns, or lodging for the night with some hospitable nobleman, the remark "we are from Wittenberg," was the signal for numerous questions, followed by comments almost invariably friendly to the hardy Augustinian, whilst the views expressed about his monkish maligners were frequently violent.

"No, by my father's bones!" swore an impetuous ritter as we left his schloss one morning; "we have had enough of priest-made bonfires with honest men, who have told the black crows their sins, thrust into them; and ere they light one for Martin Luther, there'll be a mighty clattering of swords from every 'circle' of Germany."

The good nobleman was by no means alone in his vehemence. In the tap-room of the inn at Dessau, where we broke the journey, I was silent witness to a colloquy betwixt a stout, shrewd Leipzig merchant coming from Lubeck with salt-cod and soap, and a strong-lunged, red-nosed creature who wished to be taken for a friar. The latter had liquor in his crown, and had been delivering himself against Wittenberg as "tainted with heresy," and its professor as "a mad man, a seducer, and a wizard possessed by the devil." As he paused for breath the merchant charged in on him heartily.

"Crack-brain and wizard, is he? Well, who, Master Friar, is responsible for his folly?"

"Why, the devil, of course."

"Say, rather, those long-frocked devils, you 'cheese hunters,'¹ whereof your Tetzal is the master fiend."

"*Malefice!*" howled the friar, "what have we here, — a Bohemian infidel?"

"A poor honest Christian, and much at your worshipful service," the merchant was just drunk enough to bow ironically, "and of a mind to tell you that your merry dance is nearly over, and that the musicians will be asking their penny. Rome is your city; go there then, and ask alms of your 'Apostolic Father.' We Germans grow weary."

"Don't blaspheme the holy Pope," stormed the other.

"I can't blaspheme what isn't holy. You've heard the saying, 'If hell there be, Rome is built over it.' Just as the wolf preached and sung masses to gather the geese around him, and then ate them all, so priest and prelate promise all things, and pretend to love our souls till they get their benefices, and then — prutt!" his diatribe ended with a contemptuous gesture.

"Is there no man here," cried the friar at the top of his voice, "to hale this fellow to the inquisitor?"

"Is there no man here to hale this fellow to the horse pond," retorted the merchant, and a dozen hands were ready to obey the suggestion, when the host enforced a kind of truce.

The friar slunk away, not one in the tap-room failing to fling ribaldry after him. When I went out, a tapster was telling amid roars how Tetzal had sold an indulgence for *premeditated* assault and robbery to a Saxon nobleman and had been *himself* a few days later soundly thrashed, then pillaged by his pious customer; while another traveller had already recited how the Wittenberg students had

¹ The Friars were charged with being arrant beggars of dainties.

burned a copy of Tetzels counter theses, as being in turn heretical, "giving them the fate, God knows, which they deserve."

Thus it was on all the journey back to the Harzland. Our travel was clouded by the manifest anxiety of Ilsa lest she arrive too late to find her father alive. I pitied her drawn lips and anxious eyes; her respite at Wittenberg had been such a joyous one, and all too short. In my sympathy for her, and in her willingness to turn to any one who might afford hope and comfort, we were drawn more together than ever. If we were not yet lovers, my relations to her were already exceedingly brotherly. I could see that Moritz was remarking as much with sly and friendly eyes.

"You forget that I also have ears, Ilsa," he remarked once meaningly; "you keep all your fine talk for Walter."

The little Gräfin colored and let me alone for the next hour's ride, but the next day we were more friendly than ever.

Near Blankenburg we met news, welcome indeed to Ilsa; not so welcome for me (who heartily wished the venerable wretch dead, and his daughter through mourning him). Graf Eckbert was still alive, and despite his evil courses his tough old frame seemed like to keep his soul from his last deserts for some months longer. He was utterly helpless, however, and the ribald clowns around him were wholly unfit nurses.

Ilsa's mouth grew firm when she comprehended the situation.

"He is my father," she said gravely. "So long as he lives my place is at his side."

Her decision, of course, destroyed my pleasure for the rest of the winter. It was impossible for me to see her; save at very rare intervals. She would not join Moritz and myself

in a gallop over the frozen crust, for might not the end come at any instant? Moritz himself felt bound not to quit Schloss Blankenburg too frequently. Despite, therefore, the glory of ice and snow upon the hills and gorges I could hardly bring myself to await the end of the winter in the barren halls of the Regenstein, with only Adolf and Andrea for company. I could hardly return at once to Wittenberg, and, therefore, I resolved to go to the Rhine lands, and present letters which I had to the Archbishop of Mainz's elegant court. I went the more willingly because I believed I might be able to win the favor of that mighty prelate, and influence him in behalf of Dr. Luther.

The day before I set forth, I rode across to Blankenburg, and took leave of Ilsa. Her brother was present and we made no attempt at many words or sentiment. Her face showed her to be weary with watching, but she seemed to be striving hard to seem gay when I talked of returning "with the first buds of the spring" to join her in the chase of a red deer over the Brocken.

"By that time," I said, "I trust your father will be — better."

"Yes, better — surely better," answered she, with a tremor in her voice, as I bowed and kissed her hand.

She let it linger under my lips perhaps a little longer than mere courtesy demanded. Perhaps I, in turn, made no haste with the little ceremony.

"The dear God and all His saints bless you, Walter, and bring you safely back to me — to us," she altered, with no lack of color in her cheeks at this last.

I muttered some smooth civilities to her, took leave of Moritz, and rode away.

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All the time Adolf, Andrea, and I plodded wearily over the snow-drifted roads of Hesse I meditated upon my own atti-

tude toward Ilsa. Clearly, I told myself, the young lady, once freed from the savage gloom of Blankenburg would develop into a gracious and seemly dame, well able to play the noble consort even to such an ambitious personage as the Graf von Regenstein. On the other hand, I reflected, in the cold calm manner which was my pride, that to marry such a portionless little creature would be sheer worldly folly. Her father's broken condition was notorious, and could I not hope for almost any heiress in Saxony? If, however, I *did* desire to win Ilsa, I made not the least doubt that the glory of an alliance in my quarter would end any idea of a 'vocation' for the convent.

"Is not the little witch half in love with me already?" I deliberated, "and am I not half in love with her myself? Fie, Graf von Regenstein! Do not be so hasty. I am not yet resolved to spend all my days in this cold Germany. I may not succumb to the first flaxen-haired northern Gräfin! and whither are vanished my thoughts of Italy — and of you, O glorious Marianna?"

Then I repeated to myself that I had a great career to carve for myself in the world, and must not let the naïve attractiveness of the daughter of a depraved mountain Graf (my admiration being mingled perchance with a little pity for her condition) interfere with my better judgment. "In two months I will see myself more clearly; it will be time then to make up my mind as to Ilsa."

So I completed my journey to Mainz, glad enough to see the spires of the old Cathedral city at last and to escape from the bad roads, and the worse hostelries. I halted at a very comfortable inn, on an afternoon, and was sitting down to a well-cooked meal in a pleasant room, intending to present my credentials at the Archbishop's schloss the next day, when I heard shouting under the windows, and the rumbling as of a great coach passing.

“Way! way for his sacred Eminence!” outriders were bawling.

“Is it the Archbishop’s carriage?” I demanded of the serving boy.

“Oh, no, gracious Herr; it is the great Italian Cardinal of Forli; he has come on the Pope’s business, people say.”

Forli in Mainz? And if he, then assuredly Marianna. I fear I thought very little on Ilsa the rest of that day.

CHAPTER XII

THE VOICE OF ITALY

AN elegant and hospitable court it was which the Archbishop-Elector Albrecht maintained at Mainz. I had no sooner made known my credentials than I was overwhelmed with kindnesses, both from the prince-prelate himself and all his courtiers. A kindly, open-handed, well intentioned lord was Albrecht, young and handsome, friendly to art and learning, pleasure loving, but not a rake. Alas ! that ambition had led him into the Church, when he had fewer qualifications for leadership in things spiritual than had his Arabian horses. He lived the life of a luxurious secular magnate, with never a thought of any duty touching the 'cure of souls' such as was assumed to pertain to the episcopal state. To him all Tetzels doings were but a piece of clever secular business, the wrong whereof he could never have understood had he tried. Therefore the world has condemned him, — not because he was a knave, but because he knew not the time and the opportunity.

Life in this old Rhineland town seemed one perpetual holiday. The young western German nobles of the court were a mawkish lot, far inferior to their sturdy Saxon cousins. They wore curly, blond-dyed hair, laced tightly like women, and covered themselves with necklaces and bracelets; likewise they affected long tight hose of startling color, each leg of a different hue. With such gentry I had little in common, but others whom I met, poets, scholars, and soldiers, made my life very agreeable. Hunts, song recitals, giddy balls,

and the like, whiled away our time. Above all there was the constant company of the Cardinale di Forli and of Marianna.

Forli, I soon learned, was in Mainz on an important mission from the Vatican touching the impending choice of a new Emperor. Every rumor from Vienna gave old Maximilian only a few more months, and the Pope had cause enough to be interested in his successor. Forli's splendid travelling carriages and long retinue of handsome servants had made a deep impression on the good folk of Mainz. As a concession to Northern prudery Marianna had travelled as his "niece," but I suspect that many sagacious mortals guessed the truth.

At our first meeting I of course heard all the gossip from Rome, — of the Pope's successful stag hunts, of the nipping of a sensational conspiracy against His Holiness's person, and particularly of the creation of thirty new cardinals.

"Absolutely unheard of," Forli grumbled; "most unfair to us older members! But the treasury was dry, and every rascal could be taxed twenty to forty thousand ducats for his red hat. Then, too, what a magnificent banquet we had in their honor and at their expense at the Vatican!"

"You will be among the next creations," threw out Marianna.

"Possibly," I assented coldly, "but I doubt exceedingly if my career lies in the Church."

So ended our conversation then, but what more privately I said to Marianna, I leave for the wise to imagine. . . .

Pleasant indeed for me was that early springtime at Mainz. Again I was mingling with men of gentility and ideas; again I was speaking French, Latin, and often the incomparable Italian. Many a day I rode back to the Electoral schloss intoxicated by the favor and beauty of Marianna, while her tall palfrey pranced beside mine. Yet I was never wholly

at my ease. Very soon this lotus eating at Mainz would end, and then — whither should I go? Back to Italy, to the roses, poets, Michelangelo's sculptures and Raffaello's paintings? Or to Saxony, where the clouds of battle were gathering, where warriors were buckling on the cuirass for a contest not with French or Turkomans, but with powers spiritual and celestial, — and the stake the empire over men's souls?

Marianna pressed me, but I long evaded discussing my intents. Quickly I had learned that arguments to turn the Prince-Archbishop in favor of Luther were as dust sprinkled on the ocean. Already the high prelates of Germany had prejudged his cause. "I will not lay down my head in peace," the Bishop of Brandenburg had vowed, "until I cast Martin into the flames like *this!*" whereat into the roaring fireplace he had flung a dry faggot. From Rome issued anxious orders to "quiet the tumult." And speedily I knew would come to Luther, to his friends, nay, to all Germany, the direful choice — to bow to the Vatican or join battle with Rome, — a battle older than the Church and always lost.

And where should I stand? I who had come to think of that friar of Wittenberg as of no other living man? I who knew that truth and God — if God there was — were with Luther and against Tetzels and Rome? Who had promised to revisit Wittenberg in the springtime? Who had also given my promise to Ilsa von Blankenburg to return to the Harzland, and to break the monotony of her barren life with her sottish and dying father? In short, what should be my great, abiding choice, — peace or storm, ease or knightly battle, Southland or Northland? How would Dame Hedwig's song find its fulfilment? . . .

Coward fashion I postponed decision, and then, even as I deserved, it was thrust upon me. I was standing one afternoon at a glorious mullioned window in an upper hall of the

palace, looking out upon the country just turning green under the northern sun, when beside me stood Marianna. Her black dress of Lyons silk fell around her in lustrous sheen. On her hair were the white spring flowers I had left at her chambers that morning. What wonder my heart beat faster!

"Well, Gualtiero," she began in her most musical Italian; "I have tidings for you."

"Of what, Madonna?"

"My father is recalled to Italy. I cannot stay here alone. What—" oh! the subtlety of her eyes as she put the question — "what are you going to do?"

I stood for a long time sillily playing with my sword belt, and willing to give a thousand gulden for an hour's quiet reflection.

"*Ecco!*" she cried in her sweetest mockery. "Since the Conte di Palaestro grew a German beard and put on German clothes he has either lost the use of his tongue, or forgotten how to understand my Tuscan! Do you not hear me? Am I not plain? I go back to Italy: and where go you?"

Her hands flew out in those gestures that double the eloquence of her race.

"A thousand pardons, Madonna," I began awkwardly; "I had not expected this so soon. I had expected your father would stay longer. I had not arranged —"

"You had not arranged? You had not arranged? O Santo Spirito, you had not intended to go back to Italy the moment the year required by His Holiness had expired? Have you turned mad, Gualtiero?"

I dared not look her in the face. She knew her power over me, and used it pitilessly.

"You do not answer? You do not say 'The year expires. I am away with you to Milan, Padua, Venice, Palaestro, in-

stantly?" Am I in turn of flesh and blood and expected to endure this, when you have promised —"

I knew she was deliberately creating her passion, but that did not make it easier to evade her. Vainly I raised a deprecating hand.

"What have I promised, Madonna?"

"Mater Dolorosa! Have you the perfidy to forget how, when you quitted Rome, you vowed to receive me at the end of the year at Palaestro? And *thus* must I rate all your lip service, all your pretty speeches and courtly attention since you came to Mainz. O Gualtiero —"

Tears, sobbing, white hands pressed to her streaming eyes, ended the entreaty. When I approached with some effort to comfort her I was repulsed angrily.

"None of your caresses, Eccellenza! I am but a poor cardinal's daughter, but I am southern born: better death than to endure ingratitude and faithlessness. If you hesitate to return to Italy, at least declare your reasons. Honor demands that!"

"I cannot well express them, and yet I would stay a season or so longer in Germany."

"Cannot express them?" her eyes were now flashing daggers. "O miracle, — the Conte di Palaestro and his nimble tongue at a loss. Here, then. Answer as I suggest them. You fear the vengeance of the Archbishop of Bari?"

"Folly. He at least knows I am not the man to seek after."

"Your castle — your noble and elegant Palazzo di Regenstein needs your amiable watch-care over its garrison of wolf-hounds?"

"Not so." I rejoined abruptly.

"Ah," spoke she archly; "I think you have spoken of a lady in a neighboring bandit's warren; no doubt beautiful, nobly born, learned — the Contessa di Blankenburg."

"I would not tarry for her," I replied, though I felt my forehead glow guiltily.

"You find this charming German climate, with its thaws, and snows, and winter, more delectable than the breezes from Soracte and the Apennines?"

"Marianna," spoke I, turning at bay at last, "do not chatter foolishness. Those are none of my reasons."

"Then," said she, looking me straight in the face, "the Wittenberg friar has bewitched you. You would stay for his sake."

Instantly I felt the cords of my tongue loosed.

"Yes," I answered. "I would stay for his sake. He is not a friar, he is a man. He is protesting against foul hypocrisy and iniquity. I do not follow all his theology, but I know *he* for one believes all he preaches, and he is no ignorant, unlearned bawler either. He has hatched the egg, which great Master Erasmus laid years since, — the egg wherein is contained the exposure and ending of all this merry indulgence selling, and cant, and filching that men have called religion. For religion I care little; for theology I care less: but for an honest man fighting a brave fight I care much. And such a man is Martin Luther."

I had spit out my words in a counter passion of fury, which Marianna cooled by a long, musical laugh that left me silent and flushed.

"O greater miracle! The Conte di Palaestro turning from his course to aid — an honest friar. Staying in Germany to aid — an honest friar. Yes, running even into the pains of heresy for his sake. What will your friends say? What will the Corso say? What will they say at Messere Chigi's and Cardinal di Rocca's parties? Give me wings — wings to flit back to Rome with the wondrous tidings. The tale is too good to keep!"

The laugh; her gesture more potent than the laugh; her

words; the picture conjured up in my mind of my boon companions roaring at her recital, — all were like ice to freeze up my zeal and courage. Why, ah! why had I not been given an hour of calm reflection alone. But Marianna was there, alert, persistent, aggressive. She gave me no quarter.

“Come, now, Gualtiero. You say you will stand by this silly friar? Good, then, what will you do?”

“Plead for him, argue his cause with such German princes as I can visit.”

“And what can *they* do?”

“Why, much. At their request His Holiness will go slowly.”

“Slowly? perhaps. But Rome is always most terrible when she moves slowly. Do you think your Luther will retract his errors?”

“Sooner will the stars fall. I have taken measure of the man.”

“Then, Gualtiero, speak sensibly. No princes can save him. They could not if they would. Many of your loutish Germans wish him well. Very likely. They have no armies, however. See in your mind his end.”

“You mean? —”

“A great company, perhaps at Rome in the Piazza di San Pietro, — for there he will be sent, — a great pile of fagots, a mighty blaze, a procession of Swiss guardsmen and the holy Inquisitors, your Wittenberg friar clothed in a yellow robe and pinioned in the midst — and then —”

“It cannot be. You are imagining.”

“This Augustinian is not the first to rail against what are called ‘the misdeeds of the Vatican.’ Others are before him: yes, and they did not lack brave friends. Recall them. What befell Arnold of Brescia?”

“Burned.”

“And Wyclif of England?”

"His bones cast into the river."

"And John Hus?"

"Burned."

"And Jerome of Prague?"

"Burned."

"And Savonarola?"

"Burned."

"And Martin Luther?" —

I stood dumb. Bursting into an irresistible passion she flung herself into my arms.

"Gualtiero! Gualtiero! Break this foul spell. Cast over this mad friar. You were not born for strife and disaster, and following a bad cause to a worse end. You were born for the South; for poetry and song; for all that is best from old Hellas and Rome; for blue skies and soft beds and fair visions; for happiness — and love — and for me!"

And then she covered my face with hot kisses.

Why did I succumb? Why does any man succumb when on one side are truth, honor, justice, salvation; and on the other expediency, pleasure, and a beautiful beseeching woman? I was neither a Socrates nor a Christian martyr.

I pressed her in my arms. I returned her kiss.

"I will go with you," I said; "I will go with you to Palaestrol."

Since then I have often wondered if I did not almost commit the unpardonable sin of grieving the Holy Spirit; for I knew the good, and I chose the evil.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CALL FROM THE NORTH

A WEEK at the fashionable waters of Baden, an easy trip across the Alps through Basel, Lucerne, Lugano; then again the Italian speech, the Italian color, the Italian sky.

Two weeks at Milan, a month in the palace of the lordly Contarini's at Venice, with the plashing oars of the gondola ever in my ears, with Marianna divinely radiant ever at my side, — and the Harzland, Ilsa, and Martin the friar, all seemed exceeding far away. With a pleasure rekindled by a year's absence I plunged back into the old voluptuous life. Delightful indeed to hear again the tinkle of the castinets, to taste the delicate Chianti and Frascati, to wake in the morning, to fall asleep in the evening, with the renewed vow, "to-day, to-morrow, forever, let black care hide his face. My life is to enjoy."

Yet even in Venice I heard rumors of the insolent disturber at Wittenberg. I heard his case discussed during a charming supper at the Doge's palace. Everybody agreed he was a bold, sincere man, probably of considerable piety and attacking undoubted evils.

"But," spoke the sagacious Senator Morosini, stroking his long gray beard, as he wound up the conversation, "what will you? On the Rialto they tell me his propaganda has already cost the Vatican four hundred thousand ducats. He must be silenced speedily, — if necessary by stake and faggots. However, if His Holiness is wise, he will recall the very disagreeable commotions following the execution

of Hus the Bohemian heretic. The safest way to silence this fellow is by a bishopric."

"There is no gag like a mitre," nodded the Spanish Ducca de Obispo. "I hear Rome is likely to use it."

As for me, I sat wisely in silence, by no means confident the proffer of a bishopric would prove so efficacious as these two experienced and noble gentlemen imagined.

The glittering revels and water parties, however, the excursions to Chioggia, the fêtes on the Grand Canal, the masques on the Piazza di San Marco, — all these at length palled upon Marianna and upon me. We were away to our own little kingdom — Palaestro.

What was Palaestro? The antithesis of the Regenstein, a pocket among the green Apennines, a clump of gray moss-clustered towers, and overhead the southern sky. Before the towers nestled the little village, tall balconied houses of dirty pink stucco, and dignified beggars dozing in the shade, waking only to whine their "caritas!" for a soldo. At night far down the valley pealed the silver call of the bell of the little brown church. By day the sun sprinkled his brightness over the fragrant orchards, lusty chestnut groves, and twisted oaks. Behind the old gray towers rose the newer palazzo of the lords of Palaestro, — a vast mansion, stately with Romanesque windows, Corinthian columns, and foliate sculpture. Pupils of Donatello had carved the marbles; Signor Andrea del Sarto had painted a *Pieta* which looked down upon the great state gallery. Venetian glass, Syrian carpets, cases of antique medallions, vast quantities of silver plate, — these were a few of the things a stranger would have noted instantly. Our spacious halls and sunny logias looked abroad upon the old Etruscan country, and in them we could walk interminably, and take our ease. If one would turn Epicurean, Palaestro was indeed a retreat for philosophers!

Thither we came by way of Ferrara, after enjoying hospitality at the court of its prince. His Eminence of Forlì travelled in vast state in a carriage entirely white, with silver used in place of iron down to the smallest nail and a harness of silver likewise. I wished my own equipage to correspond, and I fear I made many drafts on my Venetian bankers in those days,—both for myself and for Madonna, who seemed daily more beautiful as she neared her native Southland.

“Here is a fair binding for a rose,” I remember crying, as I flung around her neck a chain of Indian pearls straight from a Portuguese out of Calicut; and she took them with a gracious condescension, as if all I gave to her was but her due.

The deft servants my kinsmen had sent from Florence soon put the palace in excellent order, and we made haste to summon certain old boon companions from Rome. Signor Campelli the distinguished Hellenist came, a bishop or two famous for wit, Latinity, and judgment of good cookery, an artist aiding Raffaello, and our particular friend Cardinal Rocca, as well as sundry ladies of whose charms I will not particularize. Our heads were full of Boccaccio’s *Decamerone*, and surely never was there a better place to imitate the luxurious revels of Pampinea, Pamfilo, and their peers. My *major domus* was an adept in organizing entertainments. Every day we had new dishes, new excursions, new fêtes.

We organized classical revels after the manner of Theocritus, and far up among the rocks above the palazzo we found the ruins of an ancient temple, three shivered columns, and a great rock whereon a millennium and more ago they had burned the sacrifice. Here one day we imitated the rites of Pan, slaying a young kid, crowning ourselves with fern and fennel, and shouting a mad “Evoë!” as we danced like Grecian mænads.

"In truth, our worship was more interesting," said one of the ladies, as with blithe steps we descended the mountain, "than what the Church teaches to-day. Not that I am a heretic," she crossed herself — "but you understand —"

"Assuredly, noble Signora," spoke Signor Campelli, "only you must not dream that the true Hellenist is hostile to the Church. Ours is the truest piety. Has not our incomparable Marsilio Ficino established that Zoroaster, Socrates, and Vergil are but prophets to prove the divinity of Christ? Believe me, our cult to-day was as truly religious as a Christian mass, only its significance is of course hid from the unlearned."

"Pope Pius II made a true remark," added Rocca at my elbow. "He said, 'Even if Christianity were not confirmed by miracles, still it ought to be accepted on account of its morality.' The Church naturally shows one face to the multitude, another to the wise and initiated."

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Unbridled indeed had been my joy that day; and yet in the evening, as I stood in my chamber, overlooking the starlit valley, the great mansion still, the guests all retired, I experienced one of the most marked revulsions of feeling it has ever been my fate to know.

I saw again as in a dream — yet never was I more awake — the little room in the Augustinean convent at Wittenberg, the green tile stove, the books and papers on the table, and beside me was the deep-voiced friar with his wonderful eyes, speaking to me of duty and righteousness, making the chamber ring with the grave melody of the Psalter, using arguments no pagan could refute, and speaking as though dweller in a world no pagan could enter. And I almost heard again his word as I went forth from the humble doorway: "My heart is moved for you. Oh! seek humbly for a new and better mind; be not Italian, but German; for whether

Martin Luther lives or dies, the Fatherland will have need for all brave young nobles such as you."

And I had answered his appeal — by going to Palaestro.

I had laughed a dozen times with Marianna over the absurd appeal of his theology. I had made merry with her over the unsophisticated piety of Ilsa. I had vowed I had seen enough of the cold bleak Northland, with its drunken ritters and its swinish peasants. But had I, in actual truth? To what end was I idling away the days at Palaestro? I was surely growing no richer, nor extending my landed possessions, nor advancing my interest at the royal courts, nor gaining reputation in arms, nor even winning fame as poet and scholar. Was I prepared to choose as my adopted city neither Athens nor Imperial Rome, but Sybaris? When would all these days of unceasing pleasure end? Was there no better name for me to leave to the after world than that of a delightful host, a talented improviser, a clever talker, an elegant dresser, and a potent drinker? Assuming even that the Christian theology was a snare or a fantasm, was I justified as a confessed pagan in this inglorious life? As I turned away from my window I saw on my marble writing desk the vellum-bound volumes of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, newly come from the presses of Venice and Basel. In a kind of frenzy I searched them, striving to find some convenient maxim to beat back the train of my questionings. I could not have sought worse helpers. Everywhere was incentive to despise creature delights; to seek the hard tasks of duty — otherwise life was rottenness and failure. I flung down the books in disgust. I had read them often before, and had been merely charmed by their pure Greek or Latinity. Why did they seem but as harsh reprovers now? I leaped up from the table and clinched my hands.

"*Pestilenza!*" I swore in Italian; "it is that cursed friar of Wittenberg that has done this! He may make his own

bonfire and roast in it, for all me. Can I have no peace for my thoughts?"

I cast myself upon my bed. Sleep came, but this time with vivid dreams of the Regenstein, and the rolling Harzland. I saw Ilsa galloping before me, as we chased a flying roe. I saw her yellow hair blowing out in the wind; I heard her clicking to her great tall horse "faster! faster!" Down on a fallen log we swept; I saw her beast stumble, I put out my hand to grasp her bridle — missed it. My heart surged with horror as she plunged headlong — then to my vast relief, I awoke.

No sleep returned to me that night. I rose in the morning unrested and out of humor. Marianna scolded me for sitting too long with my books. Was not Signor Campelli learned enough for all of us? We had a magnificently conceived fête that day; a "Court of Love" after the Provençal troubadour fashion; Madonna Marianna sitting in a rose bower, while all we gentlemen came before our goddess, and chanted verses in her honor, each striving to outdo the other in elaborate compliment; and then laid before her carefully wrought questions touching matters of the "gay science" of Messere Cupido. Her own wit was exquisite, but afterward she scolded me for my banal remarks and verses.

"You were even more stupid than the bishop," she said at the end of her reproof.

I promised amends, but in truth my mind was growing ill at ease. The festival of Pan had been the climax to my days of pleasure. After that, the reaction — often resisted — never abated. Strangely enough, now that I was released from all need of speaking it, my thoughts frequently came to me in German. I once so far forgot myself as to assert I preferred beer to Chianti, and when a valet was very slow and clumsy I whipped out "Donnerwetter!" — an awful oath, that made the poor fool turn pale as a sheet. If one

had asked me what was wrong, I would have answered frankly, "I do not know. All seems well with me." Yet I was ever moody, irritable, and frequently, I fear, an ungracious host.

"Ah! *carissime*," Marianna said one evening, as we stood together on the loggia, her hand on my shoulder; "are we not happy? Very happy? Are not our days drifting on like a little brown boat on the blue waves of a bay, straight in the face of the sunshine?"

"Very happy, Madonetta, but I do not like your simile to the sunshine."

"Wherefore, Gualtiero?"

"The sun will set, and take the light with him."

"Our sun will never set."

"If we only could be sure, Marianna mia!"

"Silence," she commanded. "Have you not everything a man could wish? For us there is no sunset, only an ever brightening glow and glory."

"I will not argue against the wisdom of Signora Minerva and the grace of Donna Venus."

She seemed appeased at my answer, but I was not pleased at myself. Spasmodically and by marked effort I threw myself into the task of enlivening my guests. For a few days the festivities at the palazzo were more furious than ever. Once I heard Andrea remarking to a fellow valet, "His Excellency is drinking an unusual amount of late." This, however, hardly troubled me. So long as I did not think about Wittenberg and the Harzland, about Luther and Ilsa, I was tolerably content. Then came a letter from Rome which raked up old memory. A quondam boon companion sent a goodly parcel of court news, an account of the wedding of the Duca di Caserna, a discussion of the latest Latin play, and thus concluded:—

"Since you are lately out of your barbarous Germany, you of course know all about that friar Luther. People

here talk of him more and more. 'To the flames' say some, but that is not easy. The Elector of Saxony is protecting him, and they say many of his countrymen are mad enough to call him not a heretic, but a saint. Sylvestro Priario, His Holiness's censor, has written a bitter and biting retort to those much-discussed theses. Some men here say it is somewhat too harsh really to serve its end. He asks 'if Luther has an iron snout and a head of brass which it is impossible to shatter?' Again he says, 'It is the nature of dogs to bite. I fear thou hast a dog for thy father.' Again — seeing that Luther has said there is no warrant for indulgences in the Scripture — 'we have not the authority of the Scripture for them, but we have the authority of the Roman Church and the Popes, which is the greater of the twain.' All this is, beyond doubt, abrupt, and I fear Priario was ill advised in publishing it. Still this German trouble-monger must be quieted, and perhaps the sharpest way is the best. I understand he is about to be cited to Rome to answer for his heresies. Then if he recants, he is stultified with his countrymen, and his influence is gone. If he refuses, there is assuredly only one end for him. But I plague you enough with such trifles. Let me tell you of the Conte di Rampogli's Genoese innamorata. She has grown marvellously handsomer since she bleached her hair."

So Rome was acting at last. Of course I had been a true prophet. The Wittenberg friar would learn what it was to curtail the perquisites of the Vatican. But I had not the least interest in the small talk that concluded the gossipy letter. I threw down the offending sheets, and stamped them under foot.

"Why in the name of every saint," I vowed, "cannot Dominati write like a sensible man?" And again, despite all my efforts, I was a very tiresome host that afternoon.

But letters, like misfortunes, seldom come singly, and surely I was ready to call them all unlucky. About a week later came a letter in German, forwarded by a courier of the Elector of Saxony bound for Rome. It was from the Freiherr von Steinitz at Wittenberg, and I could not complain that it was not informing. On the contrary, I read it through thrice and carefully before tearing it into very small bits. The Freiherr was clearly disappointed I had not kept my pledge to return to Wittenberg. "We speak of you often and miss you much; but of course you will be again in Germany ere many months." Then he went on with news. Old Graf Eckbert of Blankenburg was dead. His last days had been drunken and blasphemous. Even his wildest "drink brothers" had shuddered at his end. Naturally he left to Moritz only a decrepit castle and heavy debts owing the Frankfurt Jews. Moritz would have to cut down most of his fine forest to pay them. As for Ilsa, she was of course left with next to nothing. Her aunt Theckla was bringing great pressure upon her to take the veil at Quedlinburg, as the only means to redeem her father's soul. She would have already consented had not her Wittenberg kinsfolk, under the advice of Dr. Luther, strongly urged against it. "For," said Von Steinitz significantly, "we would rejoice to see her married to some noble young graf or ritter who would do her honor, and we engage she shall not come to him without a fair dowry, seeing that God has denied us daughters of our own. However, if no such proper gentleman appears soon at Blankenburg, we fear the abbess will have her own way."

After this broad hint he went on to speak of Dr. Luther and the contest raging around him. The struggle had passed far beyond any matter of indulgences. Men were wagging their heads over questions as to the whole of the priest's right to power. It was hard for an unlearned man

to know what was right, but Von Steinitz would never believe such a saintly man as Dr. Luther a heretic, — and he knew ten thousand other German nobles felt with him. They would not let the friar be haled to Rome to fall into the claws of his enemies. If he must be judged, it must be before an impartial tribunal, and in Germany. Otherwise they would teach His Holiness and the cardinals a few plain things.

The letter concluded with expressing an earnest hope that I would soon return to Germany, “where there is a work for all of us.”

Yes, a work! Life was real there; real deeds to do; real hopes to strive for; real deaths if needs be to die. And lo! I was spending the months in this palace of dreams at Palaestro. And while I tarried Ilsa was hesitating on the threshold of the convent. Why were such obnoxious questions and choices thrust upon me?

“Your letter was from Germany?” asked Marianna that afternoon.

“Yes, Madonna.”

“That is why you are all scowls; why your laughter and jests are forced; why you lapse so often into silence. I have a command to give you.”

“Deliver it.”

“You are to receive no more letters from Germany.”

“Obedience is easy. It is not likely that I will get another for many a long day.”

“Come, then, Signor Compelli has arranged a delightful mask up by the grotto. We are to act the fifth eclogue of Vergil. He is to be Menalcas and we ask you to be Mopsus.”

“No doubt heaven intended me for a shepherd,” I rejoined dryly, and did my best to please them all the afternoon.

Marianna’s injunction, however, was broken far sooner than anticipated. Only a week after the coming of Von Steinitz’s

letter a barefoot friar came to the palazzo. He was on pilgrimage to Rome, he said, and had turned aside from Perugia to deliver this. Andrea brought the packet to me just as I had returned from a luncheon upon the rocks. It was in vigorous, though not hyper-polished Latin, and in a strong, firm hand. I read it like a man possessed.

"Martin Luther, Augustinian friar, to the right noble Graf Walter von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein, my good friend; grace and peace be to you through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"A blunt man God made me; if then my bluntness offends, His, not mine, must be the blame. Dearest Graf, I do not write you now, because I have looked for you in Wittenberg all these months and seen you not. I write you because tales strange and grievous of your manner of life have come from Italy even to Saxony, borne by too many travellers for me to doubt their truth. And now in my ears sounds the warning of God through Ezekiel the Prophet, saying, 'When thou speakest not to warn the wicked from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.' Therefore lest His displeasure be upon me I am constrained to speak.

"Did I not love you, nevertheless I would strive the more to be silent, yet now I feel even as did Paul bereft of his friend Demas, 'who,' he wrote, 'hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.' Again, did I not see you noble, rich, gifted with all manner of earthly knowledge, fitted to play a notable part in the battle betwixt Michael and his angels and the Dragon and his angels, I would yet strive to be silent. But silent now I cannot be, for I have yearned for you.

"What has bewitched you? Who has ensnared you and plucked you away from the works of God to the works of the devil? Ah! the devil is crafty and strong, and we are told can array himself as an angel of light. Is it as an angel that he has come to you? Has some woman of glozing tongue and unvirtuous heart spoken unto you, and have you been beguiled? Are you in the case of the simple wayfarer, to whom she has said, 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.' Remember then the remainder of the

tale, 'He knoweth not that the dead are there and that her guests are in the depths of hell.'

"Therefore, I say unto you, be you warned and repent. No man while living has sinned beyond the gracious forgiveness of heaven. Be not as one of those who wrapped his talent in the napkin, and must return it to his Master tarnished and without usury. Return to Germany : to the contest to which God is summoning all men good and true. Then on the last great day will your soul be clear, and whether poor Martin Luther's body lives or is burned will matter little. The Truth is from above and will prevail forever. I have spoken. Farewell."

I tore the paper to small bits the instant I had read it, but even at this far day I can repeat every word.

BOOK II

THE STRUGGLE

CHAPTER XIV

HOW I LEFT PALAESTRO

I COULD not bring myself to go to the great dining room and face my guests. I felt my head on fire; my senses were no longer obedient. I sent Andrea down to announce that I was suddenly unwell and must ask my friends to amuse themselves for the evening without me; then for full two hours I sat in my darkening chamber, refusing to let the valets bring in lights, leaning upon the marble table with my face in my hands. The letter from Wittenberg had shaken me to the depths of my being. I knew perfectly well that I was being forced to decide that which should determine my whole future, both in this mortal life and in the hereafter — if hereafter there was. There was no evading it; no postponement to seek prudent counsel. There was not a soul in Palaestro in whose wisdom and impartiality I had the least confidence; in fact, I did not know a single stable counsellor for such matters in the wide world. Across the miles and leagues, plains, Alps, and Apennines, had come a trumpet call. "No man while living has sinned beyond the forgiveness of heaven. Return to Germany." The call of a peasant-born, Saxon friar, and he had dared to send it to me, — the high-born, wealthy, sophisticated, elegant lord

of Palaestro, to whom princes extended cheerful courtesy. — And what was I to do?

For the friar had spoken the truth. "Truth, and only truth — curses on him!" so I groaned, while my teeth gritted. I could no more deny the justice of his appeal than I could deny my own existence — and my philosophic scepticism stopped at least there.

"Come, come, Walter," I once declaimed to myself, "do not be swept from your feet by a meddlesome friar's chidings. What arch-fiend has commissioned Martin Luther to be guide and conscience for you? Not the Church — the Church is like to burn him. Not philosophy — a thousand arguments refute him. Not your self-interest — even if you quit Palaestro, your business is to seek preferment at some royal court. Dissolve the spell! Cast his malign power from you!"

"Eccellenza, you are ill?" sounded Andrea's anxious voice in my ear. "Will you have nothing? Can I not serve you?"

"Yes, dog! Get from the room!"

Out he went in alarm. I was not accustomed to answer thus. I sank back to my old posture, and strove with a kind of desperation to think calmly. Then into the dark room I heard coming the rustling of gauzy silks. A tall candle sent its haunting red light over the cartooned tapestries, the high ceiling, the tall black furniture. Marianna was setting the taper on the table beside me, was leaning over my shoulder; her long white hand touched my face.

"Gualtiero."

The touch, the word, came as with a supernatural influence. By a kind of unaccountable shock my head cleared: my wonted faculties returned. I sprang from the table as though her touch had been a blow.

"Gualtiero," now her questions came fast, her voice rose a little shrill, "what has happened? What was in that

letter? I was told you had received one. Now you say you are unwell. Whence was the letter — from Germany?"

"Yes." My mind was working with fearful rapidity. In a twinkling I had decided it was best to tell the entire case without evasion. If I must fight, I must fight.

"And from whom in Germany?"

"From Dr. Luther of Wittenberg."

"The heretic friar! Santo Spirito, to have his vile paper in the palace! Where is the cursed thing?"

"Behold." I pointed with my foot at the tattered bits upon the carpet.

"Holy Mother be praised! You have treated it as it deserved. But why do you look at me so fearfully?"

"Do I look fearful, Madonna? The only fearful thing is that Dr. Luther has spoken the truth."

"The truth? What has he had the madness to say?"

"That I have sinned against God and man in deserting Germany. That I must return at once, and play my part there in the battle."

"Good God!"

It was an instant before the full force of my remark struck her. While words trembled on her tongue I attempted to break the blow by an ill-conceived playfulness.

"It will have to come soon or late, Marianna, this parting of ours. The last months have been too joyous to go on forever. Better folk than we have been thrust asunder by the fates. Dante loved Beatrice only from afar. Petrarcha was severed from Laura. Boccaccio said his farewell to Fiametta. I will not seek for like sorrows among the ancient worthies. Venus and Cupido have given us more of the sweet wine than they grant to most mortals; let us not cavil too loudly if at last we taste the bitter lees."

She was terribly pale now, and pressed close upon me. Her words came with her panting breath. Her gestures

would have been those of one mad, save for her redeeming Italian grace.

"You mean — you mean that all is ended? That we are to part forever? That you are returning to barbarous Germany? That you cast off Italy? That you cast off me? That you forsake all — *all*, at the summons of this heretic friar?"

"You have said it, Madonna," I replied very gently, stepping away from her contact.

"And since when have you reached this prudent, sage, pious, honorable determination?" she called in rising accents of scorn.

"Since you entered the room, Madonna." I knew the words would hurt, but for once I was keeping back nothing.

"Am I such a fiend, then?" Her words were almost a wail. In the red half light she had never looked more beautiful.

"Hear me, Marianna," I threw back, still moving away from her, "this may be the last time we shall speak face to face on the old terms. Therefore hear the cold truth. Who am I — German, Italian? For believe me no man can be truly the son of more than one country. If Italian, I am yet too German to make a worthy one. You know the saying, 'Tedesco Italianato è un diavolo incarnato.' What have I to give to Italy, to win even dim glory for the Palaestro name? Arms? I was never shaped for a great general or even a tolerable captain. Poetry? My sonnets show abundant talent; never genius. Elegant manners and taste? I have too many noble ancestors, men of high words and higher deeds, to desire to have fops say on the Corso, 'imitate the cloaks and cookery of the Conte di Palaestro.' So much for Italy. But in Germany —"

"Ay, in Germany," she moaned.

"There a work awaits one worthy at least of a Lichtenstein-Regenstein. Old manners and beliefs change. New

manners and beliefs are born. If there is to be a battle, my fathers would have me with the first in it. If wrongs threaten, it is mine to strive to avert them. If wrongs are committed, mine to avenge them: and if I fail, why, then, is not my state as glorious as that of the old Regenstein ritters who died before the walls of Jerusalem, yet never entered the Holy City? Not failure, but the manner of failure, will disgrace my fathers' house."

"Gualtiero! are you turned mad? You know your heretic friar will be burned."

"No, by the pillars of heaven! First I prophesied that evil to him, then you to me. We were wrong. He will not be burned."

"Not burned?" her voice rose shriller than ever. "What devils will save him?"

"I — we, the Germans."

"You — the Germans? You link yourself finally with that accursed folk?"

I folded my arms across my breast.

"Yes, Marianna," I replied, striving to speak calmly; "you have said it. I *am* a German. Martin Luther is a German. And we Germans will not suffer our truth-telling, honor-loving friar to be banned and burned by your un-Christian and sensual Italian Pope."

"Gualtiero!" The word came as one long scream. She threw her arms above her head and rushed from the room. . . .

I paced to and fro a dozen times, then cast myself down again by the table. I was laughing in a kind of unhealthy delirium. Hedwig's lines were dancing through my head again, louder, louder.

"Half of Northland,
Half of Southland,
Never gay
Till all of one land."

"Ach! Gott," I cried in round Saxon, "I should be very gay then — for I am wholly German now!"

In a desperate, mad way I was feeling a great relief of spirits. The hesitancy, the tension, was over. The battle had begun, and I had chosen my part.

I did not know what my guests thought of my proceedings that night. I did not care. I was going back to the Harzland, to the Regenstein, to Ilsa, to Martin Luther. The accursed lotus eating of the past months would cease. Life would be real; and come pain, come joy, come hell, come heaven — they, too, would be real. I was too delighted at the thought that I had truly chosen the man's part, and would play it, to endeavor to shape ways and means how I might creditably dismiss my associates from Palaestro, and find occasion for returning to Germany. Long, very long, I sat in the black room, till Marianna's candle had flickered down to its socket; then at last the door and the arras were cautiously pushed one side. Rabbi Isaac Sarfati, the Cardinal of Forli's Jewish body physician drew his white beard and long dark cloak into the room.

"The Conte is sadly indisposed;" he began, gliding about with his long fingers; "he is excited. He will be the better for sleep. Allow my officiousness to prevail. If he will but go to bed, and then a draught —"

The deep booming of the tower clock announcing the hour after midnight reënforced his suggestion. I rose hastily.

"Yes, yes," I assented, "it is late. Let me retire."

Andrea, who had been anxiously waiting without, entered on the first sign, and I was assisted to bed. Rabbi Sarfati was there with his silver cup. In a more cautious mood I would have hesitated at the heavily spiced liquor he forced upon me, but at the moment I was utterly unsuspecting. I felt sight and sound leaving me, and for many hours must have been plunged in profound slumber.

When I awoke, I was in a small, mean room with narrow windows, and these with view only over a distant landscape. The furniture was dingy, the floor mere gray tiling. From the angle of the sunbeams one could tell it was past noon. I rose with a sudden start, but was plucked back by a hammer-like throbbing in my head. All my bones seemed to ache together. I gave a faint groan from the mingled pain and weakness. My call to Andrea brought at first no answer, but in a moment I saw beside the bed the olive face of Eugenio, one of Forli's favorite body-servants.

"How in Satan's name, rascal," I began, "came I here? And how came you here? I don't take snakes such as you into my service. What has happened?"

The fellow grinned most impudently before he replied. "The Conte should be calm. He is very sick."

"He was very well last night and will be well enough now to break a cane over you soon."

Again I started up. Again a sense of abject weakness and pain sent me back upon the pillows. I could only curse under my breath.

"At least," I ordered, "fetch hither Andrea."

"That is not commanded," was the reply.

"Not commanded? And who gives commands in Palaestro save myself? Was the castle stormed last night, or am I turned mad?"

"We feared the latter," said the sly villain gravely. "It was by orders of his Eminence my master and Signor Sarfati that you were brought hither. It was said in the palace, you were ill and deranged. I am appointed to watch you."

The whole intent of Sarfati's solicitude for my health and the effect of his medicine came now to me like a flash. It served to clear my reeling senses. This, then, was Marianna's handiwork. While I had reflected complacently on my triumph over her, she had struck. I was a prisoner in my own

mansion. If I recovered my freedom without some abject compromise, I was a fortunate man. In my unskilful folly I had driven Marianna and her father to extremities, and well did I know how they could fight.

"Well, Eugenio," said I, regarding the fellow steadily, "I intend to waste no breath cursing you."

"Thanks, Eccellenza," came his answer.

"You have doubtless been ordered to report when I have awakened."

"I have, Eccellenza."

"Go, then, and tell his Eminence or Madonna Marianna that I am awake, but that if they wish to converse with me, they must first contrive to ease this headache, which is driving me frantic."

"I go to tell them, Eccellenza," and out he went, leaving me to all manner of imaginings.

In a few moments the door was opened by no less a visitor than the Cardinale di Forli. The good prelate was smiling benignantly, and bore in his hand a tiny glass of pure green liquid.

"Drink," he said, advancing to the bedside; "this, more than most liqueurs, is for your health."

I eyed the glass shrewdly.

"After what has just befallen, Eminenza," I hesitated, "I may well think twice even ere drinking from the hands of the Cardinale di Forli."

"Nonsense," he answered jauntily; "this is not *aqua tofana*. A man as sensible as yourself should know that we know that all your Italian property is willed to your Florentine kinsfolk and your sudden demise would work more havoc with our wishes than even this return to Germany."

Convinced that the Cardinal for once spoke the truth, I drank off the glass and at once experienced a beneficial effect; my head cleared and the throbbing partially ceased. I was

able to sit up in bed and ask Forli if he would graciously state his business.

From his more than customary gesticulations, his circumlocutions, his use of delicate innuendo rather than open threats, I was led to perceive that he felt he had a ticklish business, and I played my own hand more boldly. He began by recalling that he had been favored with the early friendship of my noble kinsmen of Florence and Bologna; that I had been after a manner under his tutelage since quitting my studies at Padua, that he had introduced me to fashion and preferment at Rome, "and would have carried me yet higher, but for that dastardly bungling by Orosi." Finally he referred delicately to "his near relationship to that lady whom I had so worthily honored with my affections." All this, however, was mere preliminary to an admirably marshalled attack — in far more subtle language than Marianna had used — upon my determination to return to Germany.

But unfortunately for his Eminence, the arguments advanced had already been amply deliberated upon and refuted by my own sorely hesitant self. I had anticipated everything Forli had to say, and I replied to it, not indeed to his satisfaction, but vastly to my own. The result was that our dialogue did not run smoothly, and the worthy churchman presently raised his voice to no dignified pitch, while we exchanged parry and thrust.

"Do you believe in this swinish friar's theology?" he shouted for the tenth time.

"You know I have no theology. I perhaps say '*credo*' blindly to what the Church teaches, never asking whether what I speak with my lips is written on my heart. But now comes this man of Wittenberg who speaks not to my interest, my intellect, but to my soul."

"Your soul? The strangest word that ever left your

tongue. How can this friar, soon to feel the full displeasure of the Church, speak to your soul? It's sure damnation."

"Let us have no 'damnation' from such as you," I returned. "I repeat, for reasons I cannot fathom, this Martin Luther has stirred me to the depths of my being. If damnation there is, it is such as he threatens."

"You talk like one possessed. Explain."

"I despair of explaining." I strove vainly to speak with composure. "I understand myself, but not how to make all clear to you. Surely your Eminence knows the story of the women dancers, who danced before the cross in mockery of our Lord and His passion — how they must now dance through all eternity on sharp points amid hell fire. I tell you, I dread lest if I turn my back on this summons now — and go on dancing, feasting, laughing, here in Palaestro — I will meet their fate. I will not, I cannot invite it —"

The Cardinal shrugged his shoulders eloquently, and threw up his hands.

"My poor Gualtiero; who would have thought it? You are about to begin on 'duty, honor, and conscience' again. You are indeed very ill."

"Not so. I am just growing better."

"To think that a little thing like Tetzels's incautious zeal with indulgences could make you so deranged."

"Not Tetzels, but Luther. Oh! You are only an Italian, you will never understand."

"I agree with you. Pestilenza! we will have to take you in hand roundly. I fear much, it will be some time before you can be allowed to go again without restraint. We cannot let you wreck your fine career. No, *per Dei Immortales*, your friends will save you, despite yourself. Since you are turned wholly unreasonable, you must remain here till the order comes from Rome."

"From Rome —"

"Naturally I sent a courier thither as soon as Marianna explained to me your state. Your moody and nervous condition has been observed by your guests some time. They quite understand that you are unwell. I have written to the Holy Father for authority to keep you in easy custody until we are satisfied this dementia is entirely passed. The Pope will naturally designate your place of confinement, and the time of your release will be largely of your own determination."

I sat before him, amazed and dumb. The Cardinal held out his hands insinuatingly.

"Come, Gualtiero. You see the trouble you have plunged us in. Give me your word you will not return to Germany, and I will send a second courier to undo the errand of the first."

"No!" I said it stolidly and obstinately. Another shrug and Forli was gone, throwing over his shoulder a promise to come and argue again the next morning.

After a few moments Eugenio entered with a tray and a simple luncheon, whereof I partook, reflecting that if my captors wished to murder me they would find a thousand ways to accomplish it even if I grew lean with starvation. I soon discovered the method of my confinement. I was in one of the small extra rooms upon the northern wing of the palazzo, set off for the retainers of some distinguished guest. Three of the Cardinal's stoutest serving-men were keeping watch outside the door. It was only twenty feet from the window to the ground, which sloped away into luxuriant vineyards; but a stout iron bar closed the narrow aperture, and I was without the least weapon or tool to force it. My behavior for recent days, and especially during the hours following the receipt of Luther's letter, gave every color to the report among my guests that I was deranged, even to the need of restraint. Although the palazzo and its ser-

vants were nominally my own, I could count on almost no personal love and loyalty at Palaestro. The mansion had been practically deserted save for a few caretakers, until on my arrival a horde of mercenary attendants had been recruited from Florence. With bitterness I contrasted the attitude of my Regensteiners, who would have plucked down their schloss, rock from rock, rather than let their liege lord be imprisoned within it.

There was evidently no intention of making my custody unduly severe. Eugenio brought in an armful of my favorite books and writing materials, also candles when it began to darken, but I was in no mood even for Tully and Pico Della Mirandola. Painful as had been my process of resolving to return to Germany, I did not in the least regret my determination. I knew that it would take a good four days before any order could come from Rome for my legal detention; in the meantime it remained to be proved whether a Conte di Palaestro could be incarcerated in his own palace by one of his own guests.

"And as for you," I muttered, "oh! Eminenza of Forli, and you, dark-eyed Madonna Marianna, I owe you both fair gratitude for this right noble proof of how unselfishly you love me!"

Eugenio and his companions were discreetly partaking of their macaroni and sour wine in the passage outside the door, whilst I was pretending to bend over my Latin; but in reality was devoting my mind not to the *Cluentius*, but to the more pressing problem of escape, when I was stirred by a sound at the lattice. A human form was hanging across the darkening sky at the window. I started instinctively, but a warning "hist!" held me in my chair.

"Do not stir, Eccellenza," came in a clear whisper which I recognized as Andrea. His little peaked goatee and his bright beady eyes were thrust between the cross-bar.

"Whence are you fallen?" I spoke softly, but in astonishment; "the clouds?"

"Only the roof, Eccellenza. It is vastly easy to reach a trap-door to the tiling, to climb along the ridgepole, then swing downwards on a rope duly knotted around a pinnacle and with a good loop for my feet. 'The Conte is stark mad,' they told me; 'he is raging and attempted the Cardinal's life when his Eminence approached him.' '*Si! Si!*' said I, for it seldom pays to quarrel over an unlikely story; but as for myself, I have too many hairs in my chin to accept such a tale unsalted. 'Either,' said I to myself, 'the Conte is indeed mad, in which case the mere sight of his sad state will be sorrowful but not deadly, or he is not mad — in which case he may need Andrea's wits to help him out of the spider's silk of Madonna Marianna.' "

"You reason like a philosopher. Only tell me, — do you think I am dangerous or sane?"

"The Eccellenza had a sharp tongue and a short temper the other night, but he seems marvellously himself just now. Only will he graciously answer a question?"

"Servants should not ask questions, but I am in no place to command you. Say on."

"Eccellenza, is it true you have resolved to return to Germany and the Regenstein?"

"Cat! You have been overhearing the Cardinal and the Signorina."

"It ill becomes me to contradict the Conte. But may I crave an answer nevertheless?"

"Then, sirrah, I go back to Germany as soon as I escape from this strange prison."

"I am very sorry the Conte is so resolved. Is he quite sure no power can move him?"

"I did not ask you to applaud. I know you love the Germans as much as a monk does the Soldan. Now I have said this I imagine you will be prompt enough to leave me."

"Wrong, Eccellenza;" said Andrea soberly; "an honest servant does not leave a master just because the master resolves upon what is unwise. I can lie to you, steal from you, disobey your small orders, do a thousand other things to make you curse and flog me, but forsake you in trouble — alas! what have I done to make the Conte think of me so ill?"

"You are the most honest rascal that ever escaped the gallows," spoke I, with an imprudent laugh.

"Softer, Eccellenza," entreated Andrea. "They think I am down at the village for a frolic. What we have to do were best done to-night. Is the Conte again hale and well?"

"Never sounder. Rabbi Sarfati's cordial has spent itself, — the circumcised villain!"

I need not detail all that he then suggested. The invaluable fellow had already fathomed my entire predicament, and had a plan of escape devised. It was useless to strive to remain in Palaestro in the face of the authority Forli was attempting to exercise in the Pope's name, but escape from my present imprisonment did not promise vast difficulties, though it irked my pride to seem to flee like an outlaw from my own paternal stronghold. Promising to be back before midnight Andrea swung his feet into the loops of his rope and vanished overhead, leaving me to possess my soul in what patience was permitted it.

From the state apartments of the palazzo came the sounds of music and merriment. The tidings of my derangement clearly had not blighted the spirits of the guests. They were, I imagined, arranging a *Moresche*, a ballet then much in vogue, the men of the company blackened like Moors and winding in giddy Oriental mazes, flourishing lighted tapers. I could hear the harps, flutes, and viols; some one was declaiming amorous sonnets, glasses were tinkling, the dance was swaying at its height. I could imagine the beauty of

the women, the beauty of Marianna. One consenting word from me would put me back as centre and master of all that throng. Yet sooner might wild horses have torn me limb from limb than that I should say it. Many were my vices, but fickle mindedness, I dare to boast, was not among them. I had chosen. "I am facing toward the north," I whispered to myself, whilst with impatience I awaited Andrea.

* * * * *

My worthy valet, councillor, and, I sometimes feared, governor, was evidently bent on proving that he could execute a master-piece. "I had only sheep and asses from Rome to dispose of" he explained to me afterward. "What chance had they against a Tuscan, against Andrea? Did I not suck my first milk at Siena? Their master, *il cardinale*, may know much about trussing capons so as to retain their juice, but as for circumventing an adversary by an act of real *virtù* — bah!"

The first I knew of Signor Andrea's craftsmanship was when Eugenio, after satisfying himself first that the grating at the window seemed strong, and second, that I lacked nothing of the ordinary creature comforts, barred and locked my door carefully from the outside, then retired with his two mates a considerable distance down the passageway. The songs and laughter from them soon told how Giovanna and Benedetta, well known ladies of the servants' hall, were with them, and I suspected they were not without wherewithal to drink. The loud crashing of music from the state chambers was all in our favor. I caught next the rattle of a rope against the outer wall, and Andrea was swinging on his loops again across the window. Once a good chisel had been passed to me inside, and what with Andrea working without, it did not take two active men long to force the base of the bar, especially as the iron had not been let very deeply into the stone, and with the lower end once free I twisted the whole clear in a

twinkling. I piled the chair and table against the door, for what proved a needless precaution, and Andrea held out his hand to me.

"All is ready, Eccellenza," he whispered.

"For Germany, then," I answered.

The opening was narrow, but my slight figure writhed through without too much difficulty. The black wall yawned below me; above I could only see the blinking stars, but it was no moment for squeamish stomachs or hesitancy. Andrea had clambered up before me. I closed my eyes and felt for the loops. There was a nervously long interval of clutching and swinging ere my hands closed over the tiles of the roof, but they were quickly gained, and a lantern dimly burning at an opening showed us whither to clamber with what speed, yet silence, we might. A sliding door, then a ladder, a small room where Andrea quickly cast over me the cloak and biretta of a seedy genteel townsman of Tuscany, and again I was following him. He himself had adopted a similar guise. Knowing the labyrinthian corridors and galleries of the palazzo far better than I, he had no difficulty in conducting me through the vast building without encountering a soul.

Once I paused for an instant at a balcony overlooking the great hall. The candles were burning low, but the musicians were still sustaining the throb of the dance. Around and around in graceful mazes went Marianna, pirouetting before the admiring Campelli. Upon a time I would have been close to murder on seeing another showing her favors, but I was past all such moving now.

"Will it be he, who will console her?" I asked of myself with curling lip, "or the Spaniard Don Velasco, or the Milanese Conte di Tempori?" And then I turned to Andrea: "Lead on. We are going where things are real."

He knew the private sally-port. The varlet there on duty had long since yawned and gone off to play cards with his

mates. The stable grooms were sampling the liquor at the village trattoria; and saddled and bridled stood my four best horses; "two to ride and two to lead and relay, and I have thrown the bits and buckles for all the others down the well," chuckled my admirable mentor, tightening the girths;" "there will be enough cursing to cancel a great indulgence before they can harness for any pursuit."

"And my jewels and papers?" I asked.

"So far as portable they are in the saddle bags, Eccellenza. The Cardinal just lacked the courage to seize them. And now if the Conte will deign to mount."

"Bravo!" I cried, almost aloud, "I will no longer name you Andrea, but Ulysses."

"The Conte will graciously keep his voice lower until we are well clear of the palazzo. Then he can venture upon such gracious compliments as he may desire."

Thus admonished, I suffered Andrea to lead our two horses well down the stony slope and by a road behind the straggling village. It was about midnight. No shout of alarm was rising from the mass of the palace looming now above us. The lights at the windows were growing fewer. I could still catch the dim vibration of the music, presumably for the last dance. It would be dawn, and an hour or more past it before Eugenio would think of venturing to inquire of his high-born captive "if he had slept well"; an hour more or longer before Forli could organize an effective pursuit. All the dice had fallen in our favor.

"Andrea," I said, "give me your hand. You have not been my servant, but my friend. Ask what you will of me."

The fellow pressed my own hand to his lips.

"Eccellenza, you are going to Germany?"

"Certainly."

"And you are very likely to remain there always?"

"Very likely."

"Well, then, Eccellenza, promise that however much you may learn to love that dreadful North, however much you may desire to have those swinish Saxon louts around you, I may be ever your first valet."

I thrust my hand into his, and squeezed hard.

"Andrea," I said, and my throat choked a little, "you shall go with me, though I sail to the Western Isles like another Ammiraglio Colombo."

I was winking fast while he climbed up into his saddle.

"I thank the Conte," he observed quietly. "And now, Eccellenza, let us ride."

The touch of the night air had kindled my spirits. They rose too at the thought that I was leaving Palaestro and its garden of evil delights. The good horse under me responded to my spur. I felt the wind rush past my hot cheek, I saw the stars ahead of me, and clearest of all the North Star; and the road led straight towards it. Swift as light we seemed to fly. Come weal, or woe, come victory or disaster, I knew that a great milestone in my life had been past. Other things might fail me. I had not utterly failed myself.

* * * * *

I travelled northward as rapidly as possible, calling myself the Signor Cervoni (a name in my mother's family), and easily passing for a nobleman of decayed circumstances who was journeying without state. Once outside the Papal Territories I had nothing to fear as to pursuit, but I had no desire to loiter at any of the princely courts in northern Italy. From Modena I despatched a letter to my cousin in Florence acquainting him with my return to Germany, and directing him to make such representations at Rome as would halt any proceedings by Forli on the ground of my insanity; also to send a competent agent to secure my rights and property at Palaestro. I likewise sent a letter to Marianna, in which I informed her that after the desperate means used by

her father and herself to thwart my decision I must consider our relations forever at an end. In concluding the epistle I added that I intended shortly to marry a German Gräfin.

I need scarce remark that I here referred to Ilsa. I was not sure how far I was deeply in love with that lady, but certainly I had vast esteem for her and it would be highly regrettable to have her enter the convent. If I was to live in Germany, of course I needed a German bride; and with the dowry which I knew now Von Steinitz could furnish, the match had at length become eminently suitable. I was sure of Moritz's consent; and that Ilsa herself would think twice ere becoming the Lady of Regenstein, I had not the least idea in the world.

CHAPTER XV

WHAT I FOUND IN THE NORTH

MARTIN LUTHER! A name all but unknown one year before, and now on every German tongue. It was just twelve months after the posting of the theses, on the last day of October, 1518, in the Silver Star inn, under the shadow of the gray minster of Ulm (where I was halting during my travel) that I heard an Augsburg silk merchant tell to a crowded wine room what had befallen in his city: and I give the story much as I heard it, only omitting part of the many interrupting comments, — comments always on the valiant Augustinian's side.

"As you see, good folk, the Elector of Saxony protested against having a professor of his university cited to Rome on the charges of so mangy a dog as Tetzl. So at last the Pope consented to let the case be heard at Augsburg before His Holiness's legate, the Cardinal Caietan, who is a Dominican, but who has a name for a learned and withal an honest man."

"Honest for a priest, you mean," thrust in a leer-eyed carter.

"We'll not dispute you, sir. But let me tell my story. When the news came to Wittenberg they say that Dr. Luther told his friends he stood a fair chance of never returning, but went off boldly, saying that 'Jesus Christ lives even in Augsburg,' and 'Let Christ live, and let Martin die.' He got to the city about three weeks ago and lodged at the Carmelite Convent. You may be sure there was nudging and elbowing enough on the streets while he passed along."

"Is he a tall, grand man?" demanded an attentive young ritter.

"Neither very tall, nor very grand; just a friar habited like a thousand others, only when you saw his eyes, ach! they seemed looking down into the bottom of your soul. Well — I heard he was advised by the Elector of Saxony's councillors to ask for a safe conduct from the Emperor before going before the legate, and I think it well he did so."

"Well, indeed!" bellowed many voices.

"While he was awaiting the document from Kaiser Maximilian a slimy Italian called Serralonga came to him and told him all would go happily if he would only pronounce six letters, '*Revoco*' — 'I recant.' And when Dr. Luther hesitated, the rogue asked him if he expected the Elector would go to war in his behalf against the Pope. 'God forbid,' says Dr. Luther. 'And where will you find refuge then?' demands the rascal. 'Under heaven,' answers Dr. Luther, and packs the fellow off upon his business. Then the safe conduct came, and Dr. Luther went to the legate. They say there were a lot of Italian black-gowns present, anxious to see this Saxon who had set the world by the ears, and that Dr. Luther behaved very dutifully, falling on his knees before the Cardinal, speaking him very fair, and asking to be better instructed if he was in error."

"Hard knocks are the only words for those Italians!" growled out the ritter.

"A pity you were not by to advise Dr. Martin," commented the merchant dryly; "you will admit he stood to his point stoutly enough. The Cardinal began by some mollifying words, for it would be a plume in his hat to report at Rome 'the strife is healed.' Then he pointed out one or two of the theses which seemed to him to hit the Pope's power hardest. Dr. Luther asked his reasons; the Cardinal cited a Papal Bull to sustain his point; Dr. Luther knocked out

his Eminence's breath by saying the Bull was not valid, being contrary to divers parts of the Scriptures."

"Ay!" cried a long-haired itinerant scholar, "there was a logical figure not to be solved by your '*Barbara, Celarent, Darii*' and the rest."

"You learned gentlemen will keep your formulas of logic for the schools," commanded the narrator. "We are less fortunate and only understand plain German. As I said, the two thrust back and forth for a long time, Caëtanus crying 'recant,' and Luther retorting he meant no undutifulness, but he must be shown that what he was to recant was against the teachings of Scripture. At last the Cardinal lost temper and told him, 'Recant to-day, or will-you, nill-you, just for this one point, I'll condemn all your theses.' So off goes Dr. Luther to take counsel with his friends, and on the next day and the next tries to get the Cardinal to reason fairly with him; but it is all Papal Bulls and Decretals and Thomas Aquinas on one side, and Holy Scripture on the other. And at last the Cardinal just said over and over, like a jackdaw, 'Recant, recant, recant,' — not because Dr. Luther was proved wrong, but because Rome had spoken. And at last the Cardinal called out, 'Recant or never come again before my eyes.' And forth Dr. Luther goes."

"Honest man!" chorused twenty.

"He stayed in Augsburg a few days more, and then filed a protest against the decision of a 'Pope ill-informed, to a Pope better informed.' And finally, feeling that despite safe conducts strange things sometimes happened when a Papal legate was close, he left Augsburg very suddenly, and is now, I trust, safe back in Wittenberg — God bless him!"

"God bless him!" rang from ritter and tapster; and a tall, lean lanz-knecht captain with a scarred face, a great flail of a sword, and a wonderful party-colored dress, one hose red,

the other green, leaped upon the table, flourishing a mighty beaker.

"Hear you, gentlemen, burghers, and good folk all, you know we soldiers always drink damnation to the Turk. But where dwells the Turk now? At Constantinople?"

"No! No!" stormed everybody.

"*The Turk is at Rome, his name is Leo!* Now drink with me a new oath, or walk up my sword's length if you won't. 'Life and fortune to the friar of Wittenberg, and damnation to the Pope!'"

"Damnation to the Pope!" I suppose I drank it with the rest. Certainly the valorous captain had no need to execute his threat on any one. A scene of fierce drinking, oath-taking, and interchange of pledges followed. A good many perfect strangers drank "bruderschaft" then and there. If it had been desired, fifty good fighting men could have been enlisted around that tavern to defend Dr. Luther. The next day at Nördlingen I ran into a scene almost similar. And I repeated to myself what I had said to Marianna. "We Germans will not suffer our friar to be banned and burned by your Italian Pope." Great was Luther, but I think in nothing greater than this, that by simply doing the duty that came to hand, and being true to himself and the light which led him, — he, the peasant's son, became the hero alike of the mighty and the lowly among the German people.

Travelling in Germany, I dropped my Italian incognito, but took another, Von Sparndorf (a name in my father's family), and as a petty nobleman with only one servant, I found not a little amusement and pleasure in mingling with the commonalty upon the road, and even sharing their discomforts. We had again our nights in unspeakable inns. Once I was beset by a band of sturdy beggars who called themselves pilgrims to St. James of Compostella, but who

became almost threatening when I refused to cast them an alms. I met also a company of young children marching with a great cross and banner and headed for St. Michael's in Normandy. They had left their home near Breslau despite their parents' tears "because voices sent by the dear Lord Christ compelled them to start, and surely He was guiding them." They were sleeping in haystacks and living on charity: but how they fared after the winter set in, I do not dare to say. Once I was halted by a band of mounted ritters who courteously let me pass when they saw I was a poor gentleman, but said they were watching the roads for some Nürnberg merchant's wagons. As I rode on I heard their leader whistling:—

"To ride and to rob is no shame,
The best in the land do the same."

And later I learned they were part of the famous plunderers under Götz von Berlichingen.

Again I came upon small hordes of wandering scholars led by tall ne'er-do-well *Bacchanten*, drifting from Latin school to Latin School. Each "Bacchant" was maintained by the begging and thieving of a number of sorely tyrannized young *Schützen*, to whom he was supposed to act as guide, protector, tutor and adviser; but whom too often he led into nothing but every manner of idleness and vice.

Everywhere I heard of Dr. Luther, and almost everywhere with praise. If a few monks had hostile feelings, they were wise to keep their mutterings to the cloisters. And I heard a deal too about the declining health of old Kaiser Maximilian, whose life was ebbing away in Austria. "And then," wagged many tongues "we shall see whether the prince electors will give us Prince Charles of the Low Countries or King Francis of France to rule over us." A question, which, as I soon gathered, involved many things of vast import, and among others the final fate of Dr. Luther. "For it's the

new Emperor who will have to settle his case with the Pope."

Thus at last, just before winter blocked the roads, I came to the Harzland, and reëntered the Regenstein.

* * * * *

The white mantle of snow was decking the Harzland when I reëntered Schloss Regenstein. White and glittering under a cold sun lay all the hills, slopes and valleys, — contrast indeed to verdant Palaestro. An effusive and prolonged welcome was given me by all my good retainers at the castle. Adolf in particular was almost beside himself with delight, for he had been cut to the quick when I dismissed him at Mainz.

"I knew you would come back, Countly Grace, I knew you would come back!" the good fellow shouted in my ear fifty times. As for Andrea he settled down instantly to his old ways, and the very evening after our arrival I heard him cursing at matters German, and saying pretty things to the castle wenches almost in the same breath.

I was without social equal or companion at the Regenstein, but I had no intention of remaining idle and solitary for long. I very soon got out of Adolf the condition of my neighbors at Blankenburg.

"Yes, the old Graf died hugging a crucifix, yet roaring oaths to the very last. He has alienated about everything he could to the nuns at Quedlinburg. I suppose he thought they would find some rat-hole for him whereby he could escape the Master-Devil. Poor young Graf Moritz will have to live very quiet, with only a few greasy varlets and not at all in the state worthy of his line."

"And his sister?"

"Oh! she is to enter the convent. Her father commanded it, betwixt his groans, and Abbess Theckla has been urging it on for a long day. I hear Graf Moritz has been trying to dissuade her, but unless a gallant ritter seeks her hand

soon" (the rascal looked at me shrewdly), "he won't succeed. No vows yet have been taken, but after all there has always got to be a bridal for a gentle lady — whether the bridegroom be a gay nobleman or only the Church."

"Her aunt is very importunate, then?"

"Yes. My Freude, who married the Blankenburg seneschal, says that the poor young lady is constantly filled with strange tales : — how nuns are often favored, as Saint Katherine was, who had Christ for a lover, how she and Our Lord used to walk up and down the room together, repeating their sacred 'hours.'"

This being the case, I congratulated myself on having returned to the North in the very nick of time. I had not the least intention of a ceremonious wooing. It was enough that Ilsa would make a high-minded and worthy consort, whatever be my life and projects. The exact nature of my sentiments towards her, I was at no pains to analyze. I had in mind a precept of Seneca's, urging passion for a mere sweetheart, but deliberate and well-tempered affection for a wife. I therefore with very little delay arranged to have Moritz visit me at the Regenstein, and our interview was in every sense satisfactory.

"Verily, Walter," he swore as our talk ended, "there is no man in broad Germany I would rather call 'brother' than you; and you know our Wittenberg kinsfolk will not be stingy with the gulden. You may consider the thing settled."

"I have still to have your sister's actual consent."

"Oh ! of course we must go through the form of consulting her. Ilsa is not a fool. Aunt Theckla has filled her with fine stuff about 'saints and angels' at the convent, but that will vanish in thin air when the church bell begins to ring for a bridal."

"Well —" I suggested, "how will it be? Will you make my request for me, and receive her answer?"

"Ilsa is a strange mouse," was his reply. "I will open the subject to her to-night. To-morrow afternoon you can ride over to Blankenburg and take her decision."

"That will be the best," I assented, "she will always feel happier if there has seemed to be no constraint. Till to-morrow, then."

I confess I had no misgivings over the undertaking, not even enough uncertainty to make it seem an exciting venture; still I honored the occasion by going to Blankenburg with considerable state. I wore a suit of silver inlaid armor I had bought in Milan, and took twenty men all in their best harness. Andrea carried on a cushion a gift I felt well worthy of the future Lady of Regenstein, a chaplet of pearls set on heavy gold, and crusted with six rubies. It was just cold enough so that the snow did not melt. The horses were in fine fettle. The banners whipped from our lances. The two trumpeters wound merry blasts. I had not announced the purpose of my embassy, but I suspect all the Regenstein knew my errand. The windows above the portcullis were lined with women's heads as I rode down the steep. Over the sparkling white country we flew at a brisk gallop, and in half an hour were winding our way up the rival slopes of the friendly Schloss Blankenburg. There were more trumpetings and salutings, Moritz receiving me with as much ceremony as his depleted state would allow. After I had dismounted, while we walked arm in arm into his great hall, I asked him how his sister had received his embassy.

"Very quietly. She said and promised nothing, but women like to appear unfathomable. She is waiting you in the upper gallery. I have no doubt all will go very well."

"And there you will leave us for a little?"

"Yes, for a little," came back his sly laugh.

I followed him, leaving my train below. A ponderous

oaken door was flung back for us. I entered a long room, hung with sombre tapestries. It was on the east side of the castle, and the winter sun was already declining; consequently the chamber was growing dark. A lady all in black came from behind the arras at the head of the apartment.

"My sister," said Moritz, halting. "I will withdraw." And with that he left me, and I moved on to meet Gräfin Ilse alone.

We came within three paces of one another without speaking, when by mutual impulse we halted, myself to bow, she to courtesy. I had composed a sufficiently courtly and insinuating speech to begin our dialogue, but my tongue halted slightly, and while I hesitated the Gräfin began in tones of cold reserve.

"Your return to the Regenstein is most welcome, my Lord Graf. Doubly welcome, I should say, in behalf of my brother, who cannot but rejoice in your companionship, seeing that I am to be so utterly sundered from him."

"Sundered?" quoth I, regaining my tongue; "ah, hardly more than in name. The Regenstein and Schloss Blankenburg are so close together, and he cannot complain that he has lost a sister when he has gained a brother."

"I fear your Lordship has been troubling yourself with impossibilities," she answered, coming no nearer, while her tone was as icy as the frozen sheen without. "You have done me vast honor, but it is Moritz's error if he has not told you that I am shortly to take the veil at the Convent of Quedlinburg."

I was for the instant confounded. I had expected possibly a few maidenly protests — to be duly overcome; but this attitude of stony resistance was baffling. Yet I had gone too far for any retreat.

"Lordship? Lord Graf?" I darted back, seizing the first weapon that came to hand. "I was 'Walter' when we

rode on the last hunt together. Have you one name for your friend in the autumn, and another in the winter, Ilsa?"

And now I had struck out fire.

"Ilsa? Never, never again from such as you." And even in the twilight I saw the menace from her eyes. "If right you had to use the name, you have forfeited it — utterly."

"Dear God!" I cried, feeling my own blood quicken. "I will not take that without a reason. Is a year so short a time that an old friend who returns as a suitor is to be flung aside like a broken riding crop? Your cause?"

"Palaestro." She seemed to spit it forth.

"Palaestro? and what of Palaestro?" I demanded, all my fine speeches cast to the wind.

"What of Palaestro? When every traveller has brought back the tale of how you and your guests have — amused yourselves. Dare you ask *that* of me?"

"Noble Gräfin," I declared, resolving not to lose my temper, but to reason her out of her passion, "when you permit me I will relate to you the manner of my leaving Palaestro; at present let me recall to you that your brother assuredly knows all that you do of my life there, and yet he cheerfully furthers my suit."

"Of course" (oh! how glorious rose her indignation); "he is a man. He thinks of your noble name, your wealth, the worldly advantage. But I — God pity me! (her voice broke) I think of none of these things. I think of your soul. Your soul — Walter. For I have loved you. Therefore I am resolved to go to the convent."

"You have loved me? Therefore you are resolved on the convent? Thunder of heaven! now at last I believe I am turning mad."

"Not mad. You hear only too well. Ah! if you were but a stranger whom I did not love; then I might marry you. I would sacrifice myself to aid my brother, and through

my husband restore our old Blankenburg name. But you! — It is wholly impossible. I must go to the convent — for your sake."

By a great effort I forced myself to be calm. "Ilsa," I commanded, "contain yourself. Give me frowns or give me favor, at least answer me clearly. Why, if you love me, will you not marry me?"

"Walter," she said in a shuddering whisper, "answer truly. Were you married to that Italian — that cardinal's daughter?"

"I was not."

"*O weh!* Would to God you were!"

"All men have many sweethearts," I protested, attempting to turn the storm.

"Not men whom I love," she flashed terribly; "for I love men of honor. You have fled from her to me; broken her heart, mayhap, for she was a woman, though no doubt a woman of sin and guile. And I dare say she also loved you. Then straight from her arms you come to seek mine. You might have spared me that."

"And yet," I demanded, at white heat now, "you say you loved me. You have not explained."

I saw her putting back her long yellow hair that had been falling from under the black hood all over her glowing face.

"You came to me more than a year ago like the knight who comes to the enchanted princess back in the golden world. You came with your Italian accent, your Italian manners, your lore and wit and charm of the Southland. I could never think enough of you. I lay awake musing on your elegance and nobility. You were my Tristan, my Siegfried, whereof the minnesingers told. I would have gone to the ends of the world with you, though I dared not confess this even to my own soul. When you went away to Mainz, I said to my heart, even as I strove with my father

in his dreadful hours, 'He will come back, He will come back, and then —' "

"But I have come back."

"Yes. And how come? Come with my palace of dreams vanished to dust and ashes! Come to buy me from my brother, with a few pretty words and promises of advantage, because, forsooth, you have dismissed your Italian leman, and the Regenstein is lonely and requires a proper mistress. But I, Ilsa von Blankenburg, say I will not go with you. I will not be bought and sold on these terms. I thank you fairly for your honor and courtesy, but I go with my aunt to Quedlinburg, there to take the veil, and by a life of prayer and holy service to seek of God pardon for my father's soul and for yours."

I fell on my knees at her feet in a last burst of mortified and angered entreaty. "Hear me," I demanded; "learn first the manner of my quitting Palaestro, *then* you will see all otherwise."

"I will hear nothing. A man capable of living as you have lived is capable of any manner of lie. You run from the arms of that cardinal's daughter to mine. Go back to her. Our Blankenburg pride has fallen low — but not so low that I must sell myself to such as you. At Quedlinburg there is rest, peace, quietude. I can pray for your salvation all day, and hear the church bells ring. Perhaps if God will hear my prayers, and you for the rest of your life do truly repent, we shall meet — hereafter, when the cleansing fire of purgatory has bathed and burned us both clean. But now, farewell."

I seized the fold of her long robe.

"Now, by the lightnings of heaven," I adjured, "do not talk of this folly, this throwing of your life away. God never made you for prayer, and fast, and vigil. Ilsa, Ilsa, — I know you better than yourself. You were made for the

great banquet, the glittering lights, the galloping hunt, the keen wind on the woodlands, the stately court, — or mayhap for those other joys, — the joys of the noble home, the laughter and prattle of children. There are ten myriad nuns in Germany wearying God with overmany rosaries and prayers. There is only one Ilsa von Blankenburg.”

Very gently, but with commanding firmness, she put my hand from her dress.

“Our speech grows painful, my Lord Graf,” she said with frigid dignity. “I have long since pondered everything you say. God keep you. Farewell.”

The arras closed behind her. I was standing staring blankly around the long, dark room.

* * * * *

I cannot tell how I made my way again back to the Regenstein. All the folk in the two castles and in all the peasant huts for leagues around soon knew how I had come to the Gräfin with fair offer of equal marriage and had been utterly flouted. It was days before I would stir from my own apartments. Moritz indeed came to me, angered perhaps more than I; telling how he had used every possible argument and threat upon his sister, how little they had profited, yet offering to bring to bear yet more; but I forbade him. I would not have the miserable matter prolonged.

“And I fear you are right,” spoke Moritz sadly at parting; “we Blankenburgers are a hard, obstinate stock, and Ilsa — why she is only one of us.”

Twice, then, standing in a darkened chamber, within a short time, I had broken with a woman who had trodden close along my path, — and where was I now? I think if my pride had not intervened I would even have turned back to Italy and Marianna. But although I was possibly willing to confess myself a knave, I was totally unable to confess myself an entire fool. And I told myself that the sting of the

charges flung at me by Ilsa was false. I was not vilest of the vile. I was strong, resolute, clothed with integrity. If for a little season I had lapsed from what the prudish deemed strict propriety, I had answered the call of my better instincts, and responded with the firmness of a born Stoic. And I could recall a thousand cases of worthies, ancient and modern, applauded as cavaliers or heroes, beside whom my recent entanglement with Marianna rose to the level of sheer saintliness.

So with my own self-righteousness, and, as I afterwards came to recognize, an awakening conscience, for chief companions, I passed the most unprofitable, tedious, dreary winter of my life. I did not refuse Moritz's company, and a few blunt and bearish petty nobles of the region accepted my hospitality, but real comradeship there was none. I wearied of the endless boar hunts, which Adolf prescribed as the infallible remedy for ennui. Barring the toothless old chaplain, there was not a soul in the Regenstein who could read my books; and even he (reverend dotard) was mostly in his cups, and his sermons on Sunday were rambling stories, such as how St. Peter, when revisiting this earth, cheated his inn-keeper out of the reckoning.

As for Luther (at whose summons I had returned to Germany) I could not think of him for a while save with an inward curse. *He* it was who had destroyed that jaunty peace of mind which had been my comfort and stay so long. But for him I would be well-groomed, happy, and elegant at Palaestro or some other charming retreat in Italy. If his enemies snatched him away to the stake, I almost thought I would run to bring the faggots. Yet all the while my thoughts would flit from Luther, from Palaestro, from Rome, from everything else, to Ilsa: always to Ilsa. For I knew now as I never knew on the day I had ridden forth to demand her hand, how much I had loved her, and that with

her passing, there passed from my soul the richest part of my being. Inconsistent, all this? Assuredly. Life is one great inconsistency.

Concerning Ilsa I presently heard that, after a novitiate shortened under a dispensation, she had entered the convent at Quedlinburg. "She was dead to the world."

Thus went by this most intolerable winter.

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT WORD AT LEIPZIG

ALL things mundane will end, and so at last did that winter. As never before I enjoyed the springtime, the return of leaf and greenery, the singing of the brooks, the pine-laden breezes down the hills, a northern springtime incomparably superior to the milder contrasts of like seasons in Italy.

The new life and color put me in a better mind. If Marianna and Ilsa were no more for me, at least the larks were climbing upward in the deepening blue of the sky, and life had still its recompenses. At five-and-twenty few men are willing to cry out on life as "failure." As assuagement for my troubles I had sought to throw myself into the life of my Regensteiners, studying their problems, and seeking their betterment. That winter and spring I won their esteem, and I hoped I was winning their affection. "The kind Graf!" I once heard little children calling me in the hamlet below the castle; and all that day I thought less bitterly touching Ilsa.

I tarried the more at the Regenstein because I believed Dr. Luther needed no more help. A smooth-spoken envoy from Rome, Miltitz, a Saxon by birth, had come out of the South. He had reproved Tetzl so bitterly for his sins that the wretch had slunk away to his cloister to die. He had glossed over difficulties with Luther, and by fine words gotten a promise to drop the dispute on both sides, "so that it might soon bleed itself to death." A hollow truce it proved,

but for a little I honestly thought the battle had ended almost ere its fair beginning.

Meantime pilgrim or pedlar brought much news to the Regenstein. Old Kaiser Maximilian was dead, and Europe was buzzing over the succession. Prince Charles of Spain and the Netherlands, and King Francis of France were draining their coffers to find money to bribe the seven prince-electors who had the imperial gift in their keeping. Many a good German wagged his beard with an "Oh that Frederick of Saxony would take the power!" but that canny elector foresaw the storms and shrank back modestly. Every day brought new rumors of new intrigues, and I was vastly in doubt whither in the political world I could turn myself with the most hope of advancement and honor, when fresh tidings from Wittenberg called me back to the thing whereon my heart had really been fixed the longest. The truce betwixt Luther and his monkish opponents had been broken by the furious onslaughts of Johann Eck, Professor at Ingolstadt; then, after the usual thrust and parry by pamphlets, the contest had reached a climax. Eck was to hold a public disputation on the moot points of theology with Luther and his now ardent champion Carlstadt. Duke George of Ducal Saxony¹ had consented to allow his city of Leipzig to be the scene of encounter, and toward this intellectual tournament a vast multitude of scholars and students were not ashamed to hasten.

The tidings left me only one thing to do. The pretext of pushing my interest at the ducal court was sufficient to bring me to Leipzig, and the following excerpt from a letter to Moritz (whose friendship was ever tightening) tells its own story.

* * * * *

¹ Saxony was then divided into "Electoral Saxony" under Frederick, and "Ducal Saxony" under George. — EDITOR.

"Why has my life become thus blended with the Augustinian friar of Wittenberg? Why do I feel that for woe or for weal his destiny and my own have become as one? At his summons I have been transported from Italy to the Harzland. At the news of his going to Leipzig I hasten there also. And wherefore — O Moritz? We have talked this matter full often, I know, sitting before the roaring logs by the great fireplace in the Regenstein. And my answer came not then. It does not come now. Only I am become more certain than ever that in following Martin Luther I am following the high destiny not of wide Germany merely (daily I grow more convinced of that), but likewise my own. Do I attain to the mountain summit with the dawn, or the black precipice and the deadly chaos beyond? I cannot answer. I can only follow my guide.

"I have had no words with him as yet. He has been too busy with the theologians, friendly and hostile. I reached this busy, stately Saxon city in its hot plain beside the winding Pleisse several days before him. Already the place swarmed with visitors from distant parts of Germany; not fur-gowned *Magistri Theologiae* simply, but intelligent merchants, the better class of monks and friars, and not a few noblemen like myself, as well as a horde of itinerant scholars and alleged students. Duke George the local prince is a bluff, honest-hearted ruler, whose mind I fear has been prejudiced against Luther by the fanatically minded professors of the local university, but who through all has striven to give fair play. I was offered hospitality at the ducal schloss, the lofty towered Pleissenburg; but I preferred the greater freedom of comfortable quarters at the Erbprinze, which rejoices in a very clean and friendly landlord.

"Sometimes I wonder what future generations will think of us; whether they will imagine that all Germans of the summer of this 1519 were wholly given over to the quips and

small coin of theology. Indeed, it has been passing marvellous to hear the learned debates on 'Release from Purgatory,' or 'The Authority of Papal Bulls,' which are bandied about almost by cobblers and tapsters. For the matter is far beyond any small question of castigating poor Tetzel now. 'The fountains of the great deep are broken up' even as I heard an angry monk protesting; it is no longer a matter of mere indulgences: everything ecclesiastical down to the nicest questions of Papal prerogative has been cast into the hopper of debate. But I am rambling: let me particularize in greater order.

"On June 27th the Wittenberg disputants entered Leipzig. Carlstadt was in the first wagon, Luther in the second with his new friend and protégé, young Professor Philip Melancthon, whom, they say, is the greatest classical scholar of Germany. The learned travellers seemed dusty and shaken, thanks to the springless, open wagons. As escort marched some two hundred fantastically arrayed Wittenberg students, all carrying pikes, come to win fair play for their university champions. A mandate of the local bishop was posted on the church doors, forbidding the whole debate, but no one heeded it. Bishops do well to walk warily in Germany just now.

"The disputation did not actually begin until the 27th, the interval being consumed in much preliminary wrangling over details. Officialdom in Leipzig was only coldly courteous to Dr. Luther, for the place had been too long a 'Dominican town.' Merely a few 'Nicodemuses' called on him in the evenings, while the university professors gave great feasts, with plenty of Torgau beer, for Eck, his opponent: but everywhere men's tongues went buzzing, morning, noon, and night. I am told that several learned 'doctors' lodging together even fell into such violent disputes that their good host was fain to station a police sergeant at the head of the table, with a halberd, to ensure peace during the meals.

“Distinguished guests, too, entered the city : Duke Barnim of Pomerania, then Rector Magnificus of Wittenberg University, also the young Prince George of Anhalt, and a privy councillor to Elector Frederick. The night before the disputation I found myself in a cool, dangerous, underground wine-room on the Grimmaische-Strasse, known as Auerbach’s Keller. The wine was excellent. The crowd of tippling students and well-to-do burghers varied and interesting. I was sitting a little alone, meditating over my beaker, when I saw at the long black table before me a capped and gowned doctor I knew by description must be Magister Eck, Luther’s adversary ; and I was curious to observe this self-appointed champion of the Vatican. I believe it was not mere partiality that prevents me from praising him highly. He is a tall, broad-shouldered fellow ; his voice strong, even strident, and with a southern brogue that betrays his Suabian birth. I can best describe his face by saying he seemed to possess the mouth, eyes, and cheeks of a butcher rather than of a divine ; nevertheless I easily gathered he was of no mean acuteness and learning, and the event proved that he was not an unworthy champion in the lists against Dr. Martin.

“Before one or two Dominican companions Eck was delivering himself as to the approaching debate. Perhaps the good cheer had loosened his tongue a little. At least his opinions were not cautious.

“‘You say that Luther carries the devil around with him like a wizard in a little box. Well — I don’t know whether he’s in Luther’s box or under his frock, but *liebe Gott*, he is in one or the other, and I will smoke him out.’

“‘What do you mean, Magister Doctor?’ asked one of the satellites respectfully.

“‘I mean this fellow from Wittenberg has played the two-faced Janus long enough. With one tongue he still cries out his personal respect and loyalty to the Pope ; with the

other he denounces all the props and stays of Papal prerogative. I'll unmask his heresy. It will look like a case for faggots and fire when I am done with him.'

"Hereupon with a rustle and sweep of his gown Doctor Eck started up the stairs. An intelligent student, who sat near by cast a sidling glance at me, then asked:

"What does your nobility think of this gentleman and his adversary?"

"What do you?" I retorted, always glad to draw out another.

"I remember Gregory von Heimburg's saying, 'Safer is it to discuss the powers of God than of the Pope'; but I will venture this: Eck will succeed in his wish. He will make Luther draw the sword and fling afar the scabbard — and then,' he added with a laugh, — 'the war of the gods and the giants!'

"And with that he went out also: but it makes one's heart beat quicker to know that others than oneself recognize that these are strange and marvellous times; that old things seem passing away, that church, belief, everything seem about to become new. Yet again I digress. Let me return.

"On the morning of the 27th, in the great hall of the Pleissenburg, under the shadow of its tall gray turret, began the disputation. The preliminaries were solemn, important, and unspeakably tedious. An address of welcome by Professor Pistoris, a mass in the church of St. Thomas, a longer address on 'the right way of disputing' by Professor Mosellanus, who evidently had persuaded himself he was a master of Latin eloquence, then a threefold chanting of the 'Veni Sancte Spiritus,' the whole assembly kneeling. Seventy-five armed citizens stood guard, and four notaries and thirty assistants took down the discussion. The festally arrayed hall was graced by the presence of Duke George and

a great company of his princely and noble guests. In the front rows sat many of the Leipzig priests, Eck's loyal supporters; but I grieve to say they slept soundly much of the time, and it was needful to awaken them when the discussions ended, lest they should lose their dinners. Small pulpits were set, suitably facing each other, for the use of the disputants, and so you can imagine the scene.

"You are no theologian, Moritz, nor am I; therefore I will not weary you with the dry straw of much of this debate. Esteem Eck as you may, at least praise him for having a prodigious memory — able to cite innumerable books — and a leathern set of lungs, absolutely tireless. A *whole week*, believe me, did Eck and Carlstadt dispute together on 'free will' and the manner by which God exercised His saving grace. And the spider webs of theology were wound on and on, until we layman were fain to curse the disputation and all its hair-splitting, and bid Pope, Church, heretics, and sacred books all cheerfully go to the devil. But on July 4th Carlstadt had spent his wit and subtlety, and retired, and Dr. Luther rose to do combat with Eck.

"Ah! the change! For this world of ours loves a Man, be he called Pope or peasant; and Martin Luther, I will maintain before kings and emperors, *is* a Man. His tall frame seemed a little more spare and lean than formerly; a little deeper and more 'other-worldly' the light in his wonderful eyes: but his voice had the old-time power and ring, and from his first sentence men hung on his utterance as never on the choicely turned Latin of Carlstadt. But how shall I summarize for you the debate? Though it is scarce needful, for twenty printing presses will soon fling it all to wide Germany. The combatants came to grips at once as to the nature of the Papal power. All the first day of their duel they feinted over questions of Scripture, over the condition of the Eastern Christians who denied the authority of Rome,

and the like. Eck was fluent and nimble. He was Luther's peer in adroitness if not in earnestness. Then on their second day, Eck brought to bear his most potent demicannon: we all sat upright when we heard a malignant word — Hus.

“‘Forasmuch, Magister Doctor,’ spoke the Papalist champion with emphatic emphasis, ‘in my own judgment — be it however humble and frail, your theses at Wittenberg do favor the errors of Wyclif, the English heretic, and more particularly those the Bohemian John Hus and his followers, whose evil doctrines the Church has most righteously condemned; I cannot but call this grievous fact to the knowledge of his Ducal Grace here, and this noble assembly. Nay, I am well informed that the Hussite heretics still persisting in Bohemia have wished you prosperity. Do I not justly demand your opinion of them?’

“I saw the tall form of Dr. Luther straighten. The fire in his eye seemed to kindle brighter, answering the insinuating smile with which Eck opposed him.

“‘You do ill, learned Doctor, to cast this in my teeth. I have ever opposed and do now oppose the Bohemian schismatics who have cut themselves off from the Church. Their unbrotherly conduct has violated God’s precept of love: nevertheless as to their doctrines, and those of Hus, their chief, some, I confess, seem to me Christian and Scriptural; as, for example, — that to believe in the supremacy of the Church of Rome is not necessary for salvation.’

“‘Not necessary for salvation?’ reiterated Eck with well-feigned astonishment. ‘Do I hear you, Reverendissime, entirely aright?’

“‘Entirely so.’ Luther spoke as calmly as though he did not realize that absolute silence held the long hall, and every man could hear his own breathing. ‘I repeat, this article seems to me evangelical and unheretical.’

“‘But the learned Doctor forgets,’ pressed the interlocutor blandly. ‘This is not a matter for settlement by the Vatican. Hus’s doctrines were not condemned by the Pope merely. He was banned and anathematized by the famous Council of Constance, the assembly of the piety and wisdom of Christendom.’

“‘I understand that clearly, reverend Sir,’ replied the unmoved Wittenberger dryly.

“‘And yet even you have formerly pronounced Councils a fit appeal on matters of faith from the Pope.’

“‘So I have: but I am mortal. I can change.’

“‘Where, then, have you any final authority in matters of faith? For authority one must have — else how may man shun damnation?’

“‘We have authority.’

“‘Will the learned Doctor name it?’

“‘I saw Luther’s long lean finger go out towards the ponderous book that chanced to lie on the table before Duke George.

“‘Behold it, Magister Eck: God’s Word.’

“‘And who shall interpret it, if not Pope or Council?’

“‘You, I, any pure-minded, believing Christian.’

“‘The retort shook Eck out of his sneering complacence.

“‘Saints and angels! Do you say the apostolic Popes and holy Councils of all the prelates of the Church are not to be regarded as against the interpretation *you* would put upon any utterance of Scripture?’

“‘Yes.’ Luther was still calm, but a visible agitation was running through the assembly. Men leaned forward, tugged at their beards, and felt their hearts beat.

“‘And you set *your* judgment in matters of faith against the mighty and universal Council of Constance? You dare assert that *you* are right, — that in the matter of the Hussites the Council was wrong?’

“‘For a good half minute they faced one another in silence.

No duel or tourney could have been more tense. Then slowly Luther spoke: his noble voice was not strained, but it rang clearly down the hall.

“‘Touching the Council of Constance, I say it was not participated in nor assented to by the Eastern Christians, yet God forbid that I should call them unsaved heretics for that. But this I also assert, that no man may rightly impose on another an article of belief which is contrary to Scripture: and I say more; *the judgment of one poor Christian is worth more than that of Pope or assembled Council — if that he has but the better ground for it!*’

“Spoken out at last! Martin Luther had indeed borrowed the prudence of valor and cast away the scabbard. A suppressed outcry sounded all over the hall. I heard Duke George mutter, ‘A plague upon it!’ Many heads shook ominously. The Dominicans present were open-eyed with horror. But John Eck’s horror was, I think, hiding a smile. He had indeed accomplished his desire and boast. He had smoked the heretic out.

“With a great clap Eck brought his hands together the moment Luther’s words seemed to have sunk into the assembly.

“‘If the Reverend Father,’ he spoke bitingly, ‘believes that even a Council can err, he is to me as a heathen and a publican.’

“Luther attempted some rejoinder, but it was lost on us. We had heard that for which we had waited wearily. The Wittenberg friar had finally spoken his true mind. Not prelate nor Pope; not learned doctor nor Council, to Luther’s thinking, can solve the relation of man to his Maker; but the man himself, aided only by the light he gathers in humility from the Scripture. A strange doctrine. The like has really not been since Christianity began. Will the present world bear it? I will waste no ink on the answer.

I only believe that we shall all behold great and marvellous things.

“The climax of the disputation came then, but not the end. To the 13th of July the debate kept up, Luther amplifying and defending his first strong statement, that even a Council could err, and that no man should believe aught contrary to Scripture. Marvellous learning he displayed, casting at Eck not the later schoolmen, but the weighty authority of St. Augustine and the other early ‘Fathers’: but the end was all the same. It is not at Leipzig this disputation will be settled, but in all Germany: nay,—I think—in broad Christendom. For two days more Carlstadt resumed the colloquy. Finally, on the 16th, the disputation ended with due ceremony, and a solemn blowing by the city pipers. The formal decision has been referred to the universities of Paris and Erfurt. In a few days I hope to join you, Moritz, in the Harzland; but I know your eagerness for news, and I send you this letter by a prompt messenger.”

CHAPTER XVII

DR. LUTHER GIVES COURAGE

I WROTE thus to Moritz, an honest friend, but one who dwelled much on the surface of the water. I could not bring myself to write him all that had passed at Leipzig since my coming. Afterwards I heard that, despite the very cold civility which the city magistrates and Duke George had given Dr. Luther, many a candid man who had gone to the disputation friendly to Eck, came away admiring his champion's lungs and adroitness, yet in his heart of hearts wishing well to Luther and his daring gospel. But I confess towards the close of the disputation I was thinking less and less of what the world would say of the Wittenberg friar, and more and more of what I ought to say myself. For if Dr. Luther's gospel meant anything, it meant that I, Walter von Regenstein, had a duty towards God and man which I could neither cast upon the Church, nor annihilate by the conventionalities of pagan philosophy. For be it remembered, despite my candid endeavor now to play the German, my education was that of a child of Italy — of the Italy of the wonderful close of the wonderful fifteenth century; and almost with my nurse's milk I had been taught a doctrine that will sound strange to my pious grandchildren, nurtured in the spirit of our glorious North German Reformation. "Assent with lips to the teachings of the Church," spoke the doctrine, "say the appointed *Credo*, profess reverence for all holy things, never allow doubt or questioning to pass from vague inquiry into heretical action — do this, and eat,

drink, be merry; enjoy all things human law does not too absolutely forbid; if, then, there be a hereafter for the soul, the Church you have served will care for it. The Church will deliver you in safety into the great Forever even as the skilful shipmaster delivers the passive freightage after the tedious voyage."

Some of my preceptors had taught this doctrine almost in set words: all had taught it in their lives. How could a high-born youth idle in the sun before the Duomo of Florence, or drift on the shimmering Grand Canal at Venice and learn otherwise? Two things alone saved me from too implicit acquiescence in this teaching. The first was the fact that I had become too intimately acquainted with this engine of soul salvation, whilst working its many wheels at Rome. The second was an inherited spirit of independent honesty which never allowed me (at least with easy conscience) to shift a responsibility to another, or to set over myself a moral and spiritual keeper. Therefore I had of late years been a pagan in private thought, not from any inherent tendency to deliberate atheism, but because while tacitly repudiating the right of the Church to think for me, I had sluggishly refused to think for myself. But now had come on my scene two beings — Luther, Ilsa. And the eyes of my soul saw how differently!

Touching Ilsa I say merely this. In Italy I had drifted from one dubious amour to another after the fashion of my rank and age. My connection with Marianna had been the last, the most enduring, because the Cardinal's daughter had possessed the most to offer in keen intelligence, and a penetrating wit that passed far beyond ordinary charm and vivacity. Of my mother's sex I had formed a painfully low moral estimate. In Ilsa I had seen an attractive girl, physically comely and naïvely interesting. When I had broken with Marianna it had been the most natural thing in the world for

me to conclude that it was time for me to marry, that the season of sowing tares was over, and that I needed a dignified and congenial countess. Such surely would prove Ilsa. But the manner of her refusal had stirred me to the depths of my being. For the first time I realized how infinitely lifted above a commonplace man a high-minded and truly good woman might be: what strength, uplift, nay, stretching towards the God-like, might come from her unselfish companionship; how, in brief, my soul craved, not a suitable consort, but a heaven-gifted wife. It was a new experience for me. From my eyes had fallen, as it had been, scales. And in the moment of the realization of my need, I had lost the one being that I knew could satisfy it. Would ever the mercy of that heaven I had mistrusted and defied take away the pang? All — all seemed darkly hid.

Touching Luther I had thought quite as much as concerning Ilsa, albeit in a different fashion. What I said to him on the night the disputation ended will bear its own story.

* * * * *

I had refrained from thrusting myself upon Dr. Luther all through those days in Leipzig. Once when quitting the hall of disputation he had cast me a friendly smile and nod, but on the night of the 14th of July, when I found that he was on the point of returning to Wittenberg without waiting for Eck and Carlstadt to complete their last hair-splitting, I saw no need for longer hesitancy. Luther I must see, and that without delay.

He was lodged at the humble Augustinian convent on a narrow street by the Pleissenburg. A warm rain was plashing down, the darkening streets were deserted after the long summer evening. A lay brother let me in, and ran upstairs to announce my coming. I was quickly bidden to ascend, and there, in a small, whitewashed room, and again by faint candle-light, I saw the Man.

The light was faint but through it all shone his illuminating smile. Up to me with long brave steps he strode, and his hand closed tightly over mine.

"I knew you would come," was all he said, and then made haste to pluck off my wet cloak and shake it with a zest and vigor that at another moment would have set me laughing.

"Yes, Dr. Luther," I said quietly, "you see I am your obedient parishioner. Your letter found me in Italy; I returned to the Harzland, and now — here I am."

He eyed me kindly but shrewdly. Both of us were anxious to speak of near, but tender, things, and it was hard to begin. So for a moment we bartered commonplaces. I complimented him upon the skill he had shown in the debate. He shrugged his shoulders in displeasure.

"We had words, words, words. *Vox et praeterea nihil*. It has been a mere loss of time, this disputation, not an honest searching after truth. For two years' time we have been examining these doctrines of Eck: we have counted all their bones. Now comes this fellow, and he has made more outcry in one hour than we in two years."

"Hardly that," I returned, smiling. "I think you said somewhat concerning the Councils and the Hussites which all Germany will hear."

"Liebe Gott, yes! I saw Eck's trap, and with both eyes open walked into it. That will indeed make a cawing and rattling among the rooks and daws. But it was Heaven's will the truth should come out. As well now as a little later — it was God's way."

"Cawing and rattling it will make, I promise you. I think the rattling will reëcho even in Rome. It will sound strange."

He glanced about the room in the sly manner of a child about to whisper some naughtiness, then plucked my arm and put his face against my ear.

"Let me whisper it. The thing has been growing on me long. I have tried to resist. Now I am made certain."

"What is it?" I demanded.

"The true name of the Pope is 'Anti Christ.'"

"You will proclaim this?" for even I was startled.

"When God wills. It must all come out in His time."

I admit, as he spoke, the vision of His Holiness's sumptuous court; the pageants of the Vatican; the innumerable Monsignori, chamberlains, ushers, cardinals; the vision of the Vicar of Peter himself enthroned beneath the triple tiara, all came before me; and against them stood the dark-robed friar in the whitewashed room. What equality? But I was in no mood for debating then. I had come to this friar with a burdened soul. Here, if anywhere, I must find release. In a kind of desperation I darted out upon my task.

"Doctor Martin, I am not come to talk of Eck, or Papal Powers, or of Indulgences. I am come to talk of that which is to me nearer, dearer; my own soul. I am as a man crushed under an intolerable weight. I have done that which was evil in the sight of man and God. I am full of earthly wisdom — it profits me nothing. I am rich, and nobly born. Of what avail? The meanest peasant upon my Regenstein lands can look up to heaven with better conscience than I. For he has been given little, and must repay little. And I have been given the best of the world — and how can I ever repay —" Here I know my tongue clove in my mouth, my eyes were wet. I felt a hand, firm and comforting, upon my shoulder.

"Poor lad."

That was all; but it sent an answering thrill of warmth through all my veins. I started to fall on my knees.

"Oh, Father, Father Martin. I have not confessed these many years to a priest, but now I confess to you. Hear me, hear —"

"Never am I 'Father' to such as you. Call me Brother. 'Brother Martin,' your brother in Christ, by whose dear name we are taught to have hope in heaven. And now talk to me, Walter, talk to me even as a man talketh to his friend."

"Walter?" So to this heretic friar I was not Graf von Regenstein, but only brother and familiar friend. The thought brought infinite joy. I stood again, and let him lead me to a hard oaken bench. And there we sat down together, his arm around my shoulders, even as my father's had been the night before he departed to his last battle. And once started, all the tale of my youth came out. Frivolities or worse at Florence and Rome that must have vexed my companion's very ears; the story of my career with Marianna; the circumstances of my banishment to Germany; my hour of temptation at Mainz and how I had yielded; and finally how I had quitted Palaestro, and my last sad encounter with Ilse.

Then silence at length, after I had poured out the very dregs of my spirit. At last Dr. Martin's deep voice answered me.

"They are very joyful in heaven this night."

"What do you mean?"

"Is it not written, 'joy shall be in heaven over one wanderer that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance?'"

"Ah, yes, Brother Martin, but being sorry is not being healed. You have taught me the folly of the indulgence papers that have salved so many. I am very sick."

"Sick indeed *liebe* Walter; and it is not easy to name the saint for your ailment. St. Antonius avails they say for swollen limbs, St. Blasius for a stiff neck; but whom save the Lord Christ for the illness of the soul."

"You speak of Him. He is very far away and strange. Socrates I can understand, and Plato and Plotinus. I can

see in divers saints of the Church examples to honor, nay imitate ; but the Lord Himself — it is hard.”

Dr. Martin’s strong hand clinched.

“Oh ! Rome, this is thy handiwork — the building of high bulwarks ’twixt the soul that seeks and the God that loves. Have you, Walter, ever *believed* that you believed the formal teachings of the Church ?”

“In a blind and formal way, yes. They have never entered into my life.”

My companion gave a bitter laugh.

“You remember the story told by Erasmus. A man lay dying. The devil came to him, striving to trip him into some heresy, then snatch his soul. Thus they debated, the devil asking, ‘What do you believe?’ ‘What the Church believes.’ ‘And what does the Church believe?’ ‘What I believe.’ ‘And what then *do* you believe?’ ‘Why, what the Church believes.’ — The chain seems endless. You are brought to a trackless desert, starving and without water.”

“Even so.”

“Well, then, Walter mine, a great sinner am I, but not Erasmus’s devil ; so answer me. Is there nothing you truly believe in, beyond the certitude of your own wretchedness ?”

“Yes, one thing. I cannot say with sincerity ‘I believe in God,’ but I can say to all the world ‘I believe in Martin Luther.’”

He withdrew his arm suddenly.

“*Absit omen !* this must never be. Have I not burdens enough to bear, without having to play the God in your eyes ?”

“It is you, Brother Martin, that have convinced me that theology is not the vilest snare ever invented to pilfer the pockets of silly men.”

“And yet you say you believe in me, though not in God. Why is that ?”

"Because in you I have seen that which I would fain have God to be."

Luther averted his face.

"Sinner I am ! And yet you say this ? But at length I see the light in your gropings. Not Brother Martin you reverence, but the essence of God, which shines by His Grace through me, however unworthy. This is beyond my deserts. Yet I am glad. For I see your way to happiness."

"Tell it : ah ! tell."

"Do not fret too sorely over matters of faith and belief. Long ago it was written 'He who will do the will, shall know the doctrine.' Do not be over-curious as to the dark things before which human wisdom springs back baffled. Man's reason and philosophy can teach how to build houses, to live decent and honest ; nay, sometimes to achieve earthly greatness. But how man should come to God and His dear Son, and how sinful folk may be born unto eternal life, — philosophy teaches none of that. 'The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation.' The knowledge comes to the open and penitent heart, by the free spirit of grace descending through God's word."

"But, O Brother Martin," my speech came hard ; — my whole soul seemed straining to express itself with my tongue, — "you have railed long at the hypocrisies of the would-be righteous, and yet is there nothing that a needy man may do that can avail. Are pilgrimage, oblation, austerities, — all the things wherewith men of a former time have tried to turn an angry heaven, — are they now profitless forever?"

In the dim candle-light I could see him smile, while his deep voice rolled out the majestic sentences.

"Is it not written, '*He hath showed thee O Man, what is good. And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*' And yet again, '*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose*

the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke.'"

"If that were all. If that were all." I kept repeating, my head still burning, "but the Church has taught so long —"

Luther silenced me with a commanding gesture. "Forget the Church. The builders of the Church were men — I dare say it, very fallible men. Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventura, nay, even St. Francis and St. Dominic, had their sins as well as you and I. They can err. All men can err. Popes can err most of all. Full many of them, if their history foreshadows anything, are now in hell. Since my struggle began I have delved deep into Church history. I have found so much clay mingled with the brass and iron of the builders of the Church that I must call them weak indeed. But one thing is not of men. It is of God. It is steadfast, sure. Therefore — *read!*"

"Read what?"

"Read **THE BOOK!**"

"The Scriptures?"

"You have said it. Have you never read God's Word?"

"I have read the lore of the Greeks and the Latins; of Dante, of Petrarch, and all the later Italians; nay, I have studied the 'gay poetry' of the troubadours of Provence. I have dipped in your Wolfram von Eschenbach and your Walter von der Vogelweide. But what you call 'The Book' I have not read. Once at Padua in the library I took up a Vulgate. My preceptor caught me. 'Read it no more,' he commanded; 'it is a work for beggarly friars, not for signori of *vértú*. The Latin of St. Jerome is execrable. It will ruin your Ciceronian style.' Later when I had mastered Greek, I thought of reading the New Testament in the original. Behold, — I was warned the Gospels and Epistles were without Attic idiom; I must eschew them or my taste were ruined!"

Again came Dr. Martin's bitter laugh.

"O master counsel of the devil! Surely God is mightier than he, else this Book would long since have been destroyed — for from of old the fiend has raged against it. By a miracle it has been preserved, and it will confound the powers of darkness yet. Against this Book have raged many potentates — of Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. They are gone. The Book remains, and will remain forever and ever; for it is a fiery shield, of more substance, and purer than gold. Tried in the fire it overcomes the fury of the raging heat: and even so he who trustingly uses this shield overcomes all. He stands secure everlastingly, against all human misfortune. With this shield he fears nothing: nor death, nor hell, nor all the devils."

Then again after a long pause he commanded, "READ!"

"I promise it."

"Read. 'And the Lord God will give thee light.' Day and night, my Walter, have I sought heaven on my knees for you since that evening we talked together in Wittenberg — you and I. And now Eck, Caëtanus, the Dominicans, the Pope, — all, all are forgotten. I grow strong and bold. For heaven has given me my heart's desire. I am given your soul, O Walter — brother, mine, mine."

He cast his arms about me, and kissed me; we knelt down together, and he uttered a prayer for me the like whereof I had never heard, no, not in the holiest basilica in Rome. We arose and again he kissed me.

"Go back to Regenstein," he enjoined. "Be a just lord unto your peasants. You shall answer for them to God. Care for the little children. See that the lads and maids live true and honest. Read and pray diligently, but be not over-anxious for a sudden resolving of doubts and the gift of miracles. And if in the months to come it be God's will to work a great change on the face of Germany and all

Christendom, be ready, a valiant helper, to do the deed He commands."

"And Ilsa," I asked at parting; "shall I crush her forever from memory?"

"Bow to God's will," he answered slowly. "He can bring to pass doings that may be marvellous in our eyes. All lies in His hands. Do not pry too far into the future. Let the morrow care for itself. And yet" — he hesitated as he spoke — "the day may come when even nuns' veils, and vows, and convent walls will be as a tale that is told. For we live amid the Lord's doings. They are marvellous in our eyes."

And then I passed out into the warm, rainy night.

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The next day, without waiting for Carlstadt and Eck to conclude their final arguments, Dr. Luther left Leipzig for Wittenberg. When I hear men criticize him as being harsh and uncharitable in dealing with opponents I recall one of his acts whilst in Leipzig, — how he wrote a letter of comfort and condolence to no less a person than Johann Tetzel, who lay dying in ignominy, execrated even by the Papalists, at the Dominican convent. "The matter had passed beyond him," Luther assured the miserable indulgence vendor, "not Tetzel was the author of the great contention, but quite another, greater than he." And so with consolation from the man he had berated, on July the 4th, while Luther was locking horns with Eck, the fellow died. Let his judgment be left with God.

I travelled with Dr. Martin back to Wittenberg. He was weary physically and mentally, and glad to be again in his quiet home cloister. On the journey I made the happy friendship of his *fidus Achates*, young Professor Melanchthon, whose classical learning nobly used was to be such a prop to Luther, such an ally to the Reformation. After a stay of some weeks at the University, amid pleasant comradeship, I did as I had been bidden — I returned to the Regenstein.

CHAPTER XVIII

I HEAR OF ILSA

Now for the first time I began truly to labor for what did not concern that most unsatisfactory thing called myself. That a man of parts and fortune owed anything in the way of service to his fellow-men, beyond observing the polite social conventionalities, is something I learned from no preceptor in Padua, Bologna, or Florence. But I strove to make amends now; and perhaps the mere novelty of the task made it the more pleasing. With all the energy that in me lay I applied myself to studying and bettering the condition of my peasants. Here were over a thousand folk with immortal souls, dwelling in the Regenstein and the hamlets around it, and I their absolute lord and master, with "imperial right of pit and gallows"; in other words, with power to consign them to any form of misery, including the grave. My father had left his German lordship largely to Adolf's rough rule and fostering, and the latter shaggy individual had dispensed a severe but at least impartial justice. Now, however, I resolved to prove that because a nobleman spoke Latin and read Greek, he was not incapacitated for studying the needs of his dependants. My first step was to dismiss upon a meagre pension Father Jakob, the chaplain who had too long afflicted the Regenstein with the mouthings which he had called homilies, and with his irregular life. The first Sunday after my return I had caught him in the buttery, eating soup previous to saying mass.

"Magister Jakob," said I, raising my eyebrows, "do you not know that this is forbidden by the Church?"

"Nonsense, Countly Grace," had been his answer, between the smacking spoonfuls. "The Saviour gets through bolts and locks; and this soup won't stop the holy wafer."

I left him to continue his feast, but when that day in the crowded chapel he spent the whole sermon hour talking endlessly about the manner of raiment worn by the angel who appeared to Mary, — whether with white, red, or variegated clothes, and about the precise aspect of St. Joseph, my wrath boiled over. My first duty to the Regenstein was to see that the simple piety of my peasants was not polluted longer by such as he.

The next day all my dependants were buzzing with a horror they hardly suppressed in my sight. The Lord Graf had actually had Father Jakob clapped in a dungeon, "there to stay three days, to have bread and water only, and to meditate upon his sins," while a messenger had sped toward Wittenberg, begging Dr. Luther to send some pious and tolerably learned priest! I think if Adolf had not stood stoutly by me, my Regensteiners would have mutinied at the order to lock up the Chaplain; for he had threatened them with all the fury of the Vatican and the thunders of heaven. But the three days passed. Father Jakob emerged from his dungeon a sadder and hungrier man. The pinnacles of the Regenstein still rose proudly in the sky. No plague had swept off the children or harried the flocks. I had won a moral victory that gave me an invaluable hold over my peasantry. In due time an honest and sincerely devout young parson, a pupil of Dr. Luther, came to take up the parish, and much genuine comfort I was to gain from his support and company.

But this was only the beginning. The peasants needed far more than better sermons. Very few of my subjects

could read, much less write. Their huts were such that often I felt the swine were better housed than the children. Their agriculture was utterly crude. Repeated bad harvests had driven them to desperation. I heard many rumors that my subjects were becoming impregnated with the *Bundschuh* movement, — that secret league among the peasants, farther south, which in a few years was to culminate in bloody revolt against their lords, and infinite ruin and misery. Many were in debt to the Halberstadt usurers, and ever becoming more hopelessly involved. All over Germany again prices were increasing direfully. The price of black bread had trebled in half a generation. Along with this I found that Adolf, with a loyalty to my interest admirable in any other case, had been exacting the uttermost farthing in the way of rents and dues. I was horrified to learn that even while I was in Leipzig a peasant, caught by my underlings cutting down a tree illicitly, had had his feet put in the stocks, and his soles burned nigh to a crisp in a slow fire. It was easy to halt deeds like that. Easy when I had my Venetian bankers, to satisfy some of the most greedy usurers, to distribute seed corn, and breeding cattle, to arrange for the opening of a school in the largest hamlet, to bestow direct alms upon the most needy. All this won me the noisy popularity which the down-trodden will usually fling to the generous. But to put matters so that my Regensteiners should become self-respecting, prosperous folk, would be the work not of weeks, but of years — and of infinite labor and patience.

For that spirit of labor and patience I made daily prayer, — for I was frequently praying now. I tried indeed to remember Luther's mandate — to trust, to work, and not to question curiously; but incessantly I read the new, strange book — the Bible. A Vulgate, a Septuagint, an Erasmus's Greek New Testament I had brought from Wittenberg —

and I read them with all the avidity with which as a young lad I had first devoured the tomes of Cicero. I tried to forget the issues of doctrine, the pressing matters of debate and doubt; to read, to read, and ever again to read—and I marvelled more and more. Here was a new world to me; a world of eternal spiritual values, and I entered into it with that keen and novel delight the exploring Spaniards must enjoy in the Indies when bursting upon some silver city ruled by a golden-clad cazique and his feather-crowned warriors. I remember how late, very late one night I closed the volume. I had just finished reading the great argument of Job. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

"O foolish Grecians and Latinists," I cried aloud to my empty chamber; "will ye indeed praise Euripides and Lucretius and withhold your praise from this!"

And every night I launched out upon my voyages of discovery, — now in Genesis, now in Isaiah, now in the Gospels, — and always found that which rewarded me more than all the precious silks and porcelains from Zipango or Cathay. A personal record this? Yes, — but I tell no secrets: my experience was that of a myriad others up and down broad Germany, who were for the first time learning to find the imperishable gold, prompted by the lessons of the friar of Wittenberg.

Thus for some months I worked, read, studied, and strove to crush all thoughts of Ilsa from my heart.

* * * * *

In October came a break in my chosen routine. Thus it came. Pseudo-friars who eked out scanty alms by thievery, and masterless rogues who had turned poachers, had plagued us all the summer; but now one morning Adolf came dancing in to me with gleeful eyes and an excited story.

"A right true robber" had been found on the Regenstein lands. He had pillaged hen-roosts for some nights at Plat-

tenberg, and last night a farmer, one Gustav Lampe, had waited behind his barn, suspecting an inroad. By the light of the moon he had caught the rascal in the act and article of making off with a game bag of choice poultry, and had pounced upon him. But the robber had whipped out a knife as long as one's arm, and left poor Lampe helpless beside the hay cock, with a desperately wounded shoulder. Lampe had raised a great clamor. The neighbors had turned out. The thief had dropped his bag, and run for dear life to the western woods towards Michaelstein, and there he was surely hiding. At first dawn they had come to the castle for dogs, horses, and weapons, and "they did not doubt his Countly Grace would bestir himself."

Only one thing was left for me to do. If I could not suppress common crime, I had lost all hold on my peasantry. Moritz was invited to join us with a band from Blankenburg. All that day the great dogs bayed in the wood, and some fifty of us beat up the thickets; in mid afternoon we found our quarry. He was a tall, powerful man, and made a desperate run for it. At last the dogs cornered him under a giant fir tree. It was a sight when I broke in upon them, — the fellow lunging about with his big knife, striving with despair to keep the brutes from his throat, and the dogs all leaping at him with as good will as upon a boar or stag. He had killed one hound already, when Adolf whipped them off, and then he sullenly dropped his knife.

"Better hanging than being eaten alive," he muttered between his pantings, as my men roped his hands behind him, and we all trooped triumphantly back to the Regenstein. The women and children came out to greet us, as if we were Roman conquerors, and they "oh-ed," and "ah-ed" long at our captive. As for Adolf, without consulting me, he ordered Rüdiger (who attended to such nice matters), "to get the gibbet and running noose ready." However, I was not pre-

pared for such speedy justice. I did not flinch from the disagreeable task of passing on the life of a fellow-man; but hanging even a worse wretch without formality was another matter. In the great hall I held court. Moritz stood at my right hand as assessor; the prisoner, pale, and pinioned, was before me; the whole room was crowded with uncouth retainers flashing their spears and partizans; while behind the men pressed the brightly kirtled women. The ruddy torch-light added a touch of barbaric color to the whole. I felt I was a Turkish pasha about to order in the black slave with his bow string.

The guilt of the prisoner was undoubted. Lampe was not so wounded he could not come and identify. The robberies had been extensive. The way the fellow had used his knife showed he would not stick at murder. Adolf was already whispering to a varlet to "bring in the new parson to confess this fine bird before he gets his dance on nothing," when I began to interrogate the prisoner.

"What have you to say to these charges?"

"Nothing." He held down his head in stolid defiance.

"You know your life then is forfeit?"

"I suppose so."

"How came a great hulking fellow of your age to turn rogue? You should have been an honest man. Whence came you?"

"From Quedlinburg." I saw Moritz's ears prick.

"Quedlinburg? And what did you there?"

"I was an honest peasant on the abbey lands. A month ago the Vogt¹ of the Abbess came to demand my rent. He required too much. I am a man of hot temper. Words flew, I struck him. Then he slandered me to the Abbess with all manner of vileness. My Lady Abbess when she once believes the worst of a man has as much mercy as a hawk for a sparrow. I was sorely and publicly flogged."

¹ A kind of business steward.

"Flogged he was — by St. Stephen!" cried Adolf, plucking back the fellow's tattered shirt and disclosing a foul row of scarcely healed welts; "but like enough for good causes."

"Ay, call me liar an you will," growled the fellow, snapping at his red tangle of a beard; "a few sweet words more or less will not hurt, when all's to end on the halter."

"Go on, rogue," I enjoined; "why did that flogging make you take to the Regenstein woods? Answer that."

"Because my little farm was seized from me. The cattle were sold by the Vogt, who grasped my poor worldly gear. With never a groschen in my bag I was led to the verge of the abbey domain, and told 'Begone; if you come back, it won't be whips for you, but gallows.' So I sought your woods. I was desperate, and had to keep from starving."

"Umph! Have you a wife and children?"

"My wife is with the saints these ten years — God rest her well! I've no sons. One daughter is honestly married to a smith in Wernigerode. The other is a lay servitor at Quedlinburg abbey."

"Is, you say?" I asked, feeling my pulses tingle. "Was she not dismissed when you were disgraced?"

"No, she was kept; the abbess did not push her fury so far."

"What's your name, fellow?"

"Gunter, Countly Grace, Gunter of the Brook — for by it was my poor farm."

I rose abruptly from the judgment seat. I had reached a sudden decision.

"Adolf," I commanded, "conduct this man to my private chamber. I will interrogate him apart from this rabble. Graf Moritz, do me the honor to come with me."

"But the gallows?" pressed Adolf in dismay.

"There'll be no hanging at present. Let Rüdiger unrig them."

"And your Lordship will be alone with this villain?" cried Adolf, as if misdoubting his ears.

"Exactly so. Obey me." My tone brooked no denying. To the immense disappointment of the crowded hall I had the fellow into my own room, and there with only Moritz for witness I drew out all I wished to know. The case was not an unusual one: an honest, well-meaning man paying for one burst of passion by being transformed into a lawless knave. But I pass over his own personal story; it was what he had to tell of his daughter who served at the abbey which I lit on as if his words were pearls.

His daughter Trude had served for a number of years in the scullery of the nuns of Quedlinburg. She was a "pious and honest maid," her father avowed, "in whom the Lady Abbess had great confidence, and indeed it was for her sake, I think, I was merely flogged and driven out, not hanged outright." She knew all the convent gossip, what young Sister Marthe said, and what old Kunigund said, besides picking up a good many stories on her own account, — all of which tales, mostly silly and harmless enough, she was wont to pass on to her father when they met on Sundays and feast days. Very good. I led the fellow through a long maze, he, poor wretch, never dreaming whither all my talk ran, and instantly expecting Adolf and Rüdiger to come in and march him straight to the gibbet.

"Now, fellow, recollect carefully." I put all possible menace into my tone. "Do not lie, or your eyes are gouged out and hot coals inserted. Has your daughter ever spoken of a kinswoman of the abbess who lately entered the convent?"

"The new Sister Ilsa?"

"Yes, scoundrel, that I think was the name. Now tell all this Trude of yours had to say about that new Sister Ilsa."

"Well, Sister Ilsa entered the convent in the winter. She had a very short novitiate. A dispensation from the

bishop or something like that — your Countly Grace knows better than I. They said she was the abbess's niece, but I think My Lady showed her more rather than less severity on that account. Bread and water all day in her cell, for the most trivial error in telling her beads; and then to lie all night in the cold chapel before the altar, her arms spread out cross-fashion."

"That is Aunt Theckla for a surety!" muttered Moritz in my ear.

"The poor thing would be all blue and pale from the cold until the summer came. The nuns said she was very pious; no one more rigorous with herself than she. She seemed very unhappy. Often Trude said she looked to have been weeping. Once Sister Marthe said that there was a long story about this nun; that her father had died a raging and godless man; that she had once a lover who seemed a fine brave ritter indeed; but who presently seemed like to prove as bad as her father. So Sister Ilsa had sought the convent to pray for their souls, but she was finding no peace, much less happiness. 'She is not the kind for the convent,' Sister Marthe said; 'still vows are vows, and so she must make the best of it.'"

If Moritz had not given my elbow a mighty nudge, I would have cried out some witless thing, even before that felon. As it was, I plucked up strength to ask — my own lips twitching.

"How long since you heard this from Trude?"

"The day, Countly Grace, before I had the quarrel with the Vogt: ah! mercy! pity! great lords. I was in great misery! I have tried indeed to live honest!" Down he went on his knees, and began at once bleating and bellowing. I clapped my hands: Adolf and two others entered expectantly.

"Take this fellow out," I commanded. "Take him to the dungeon. Keep him snug on prison fare for the nonce. He is not to die."

"Not to die!" faltered Adolf, almost dropping his tall halberd. "A proven robber!"

"I have my reasons. Rüdiger can take down his rope."

"But at least, your Grace will graciously order his nose to be cut off flush with his face," urged my lieutenant, still blinking.

"Not even that." I drew money from my pouch. "Take these ten gulden to Lampe and tell him these will salve his wound. Tell those cackling geese in the hall that for high reasons of policy, too profound for them to know, the execution is postponed. Now hale him out."

"Oh! Countly Grace! Countly Grace!" Gunter was bawling in ecstasy, "you give me life. You are sparing me! I am your slave forever! All the Saints prosper you! May you —"

"Trot on, ape," ordered Adolf with a kick, "and take that face of yours down to the dungeon. Holy Wounds! But you could look the part of the devil at the miracle play, and without a mask, either."

Out they went, and Moritz turned to me, wondering.

"Mary and all angels!" he swore to me in his turn. "What are you doing, Walter?"

I seized his hands and almost danced with him round the room. "Do you not see? Through this fellow's Trude I can learn all that happens at the convent. I might even some day —"

He clapped his hand over my mouth.

"Hush!" he enjoined; "playing with a nun is playing with fire in a magazine."

"I know, I know." I shot back to him, "I will be prudent. I will be wise. But one thing I have which I had not an hour ago."

"And what is that?" he demanded.

"A little hope!" I answered.

CHAPTER XIX

I REVISIT THE HOLY CITY

IN June, 1519, even as Dr. Luther had been girding up his loins for his disputation with Eck, the Seven Prince Electors, after infinite intrigue and lying, bribe asking and bribe giving (from which vile proceedings only Frederick of Saxony held nobly aloof), chose Prince Charles of the Low Countries and Spain, as our German Emperor, — ‘Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire,’ ‘Cæsar, Pius, Felix, semper Augustus,’ — with I know not what other grandiloquent titles, which the heralds, who made proclamation, gave to him. So now we had a lad of nineteen to rule over us, — the heir of a great hereditary possession. Good things were said of his precosity and wit, but many a German shook his head over the choice. “There are a thousand things to be done, and only this boy to do them. Please God he will cut himself clear of his Flemish and Spanish advisers and know what the Fatherland craves. But, praise heaven, at least we have not Francis, the flashy Frenchman, to lord it in the Fatherland!”

While the election hung in the balance, while His Holiness and the Monsignori at Rome doubted how the electoral pendulum would swing, there had been abundant growlings and citations from Rome, but no actual warfare against Luther. Now, I knew well enough, the Vatican would furnish up its ponderous arsenal. Young ‘Kaiser Karl’ would need the political support of the Papacy in his wide projects, and that support could be had, — against a price, the sacrifice of Luther. During the end of the winter of 1519 and 1520 I made another visit to Wittenberg, to tell of my own life and thoughts and work; to gather the comfort and

inspiration I knew would come by a week of contact with Dr. Luther, and to learn from his own lips the progress of the contest that would now, I realized, in a few months march to an issue. For myself I received hearty praise, and (where deserved) brotherly criticism. Again he spoke to me those words so often in my mind now, 'He who will do the will shall know the doctrine.' When I told him of the report concerning Ilsa at Quedlinburg, he shook his head sadly.

"Poor broken-winged dove. I could have told her all that years ago. Lucky it is, hers is a strait convent, and not one of those places where the nuns are called 'pretty poppets.' Then were her state infinitely worse. But we shall see what we shall see, and wait God's good time."

"I am trying," I replied; "but I cannot keep from thinking."

"Thoughts are free from taxes," he said with a laugh and shrug, and changed the subject.

Oh, the industry of the man! Correspondence now with almost every learned doctor in Germany: vast praise: vast blame. Doubts, fears, questionings, encouragement blown in upon him every day — ven from foreign lands. Let others write the story of the great debate. Time fails me to tell more than my personal history. I found Dr. Luther encouraged by nearly all the younger scholars and thinkers of Germany, although chided by many of the elder, and somewhat coldly frowned upon by the great Erasmus, who drew back instinctively at the mere hinting of "battle." And always amid all these cares Dr. Luther was busy with pamphlet after pamphlet, "Expositions of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen," and many more, while the Wittenberg printing-press kept clanging, clanging — flinging his words to all Germany.

But the warfare could not rest with hard words and ink spilling. We all knew that, although we seldom talked of

certain eventualities. Often as I stood in the little study, leaning against the green-tiled stove, and watched Luther's busy quill racing over the paper, and his tonsured head bowing at his task, my sight would fade. I could see that which, in a short year, might be witnessed — a hooting mob in some strange city, a roaring bale-fire, and within it the friar of Wittenberg. Far, far beyond any question of indulgences had passed the struggle now, — beyond any formal question of Papal prerogative, even. Since the Leipzig dispute, all the teachings of the Church from the day of St. Paul seemed laid under ruthless scrutiny. What might issue forth neither Dr. Luther, I, nor any man knew. We only knew something was afoot, — fearful, wonderful, — the like whereof had not been for nigh fifteen centuries.

At Rome I learned was Eck, and it took no wiseacre to divine his purpose. A letter from a faithful Italian correspondent, that reached me at the Regenstein soon after my return, put forth the matter clearly.

"Everybody now talks about your Luther. They praise him sometimes, much as one praises the craft of the devil. The friars' party is scolding the Pope under breath for not 'quenching the flames' at the outset instead of wasting his time with hunts, artists, poets, and diplomats. Eck is filling Rome with his clamors. He claims to know Germany, and says that though many may now cry up Luther, none will dare fight and die for him when he is once fairly branded as 'heretic.' He urges instant action. If it were not that all state processes here at Rome are slow in coming as the Greek calends he would have secured the bull of formal and final excommunication already. As it is, the issue will probably occur ere very long. *Then* we shall indeed discover whether under all your German smoke there indeed lurk a few sparks of fire, as you try to make me believe."

The letter was of enough import to make me exceeding

thoughtful. Heart and soul, hand and fortune, I was enlisted in Luther's cause. My letters in his behalf to Rome had been to the very limit of vehemence. If thus far I had done little for him in Germany, it was because in Germany he had seemed right able to take care of himself. But now that the Vatican was preparing its ultimatum I began to consider whether my sole duty was to await passively in the Regenstein what might befall the man whom I called more than ever brother, and also prophet. For better than most mortals I knew the difficulty Leo de' Medici labored under at Rome in apprehending the true state of Germany, — how a stroke at Luther might not mean the crushing of a heretic, but the enkindling of a nation — the precipitation of religious war, beside which the memory of the old Hussite wars would fade as empty dreams. Could I get the ear of Leo for this? Could I persuade him not to believe Eck: not to put the worst possible inference upon Luther's words which might be explained as ill-considered or rash? In short, could I for once teach the Monsignori of the Vatican that they had blundered, and must hold out the olive branch with what grace they might? None realized the odds against me more clearly than myself. The chances were all failure. The man who went to Rome to plead the cause of the heretic might forfeit all past favor: might possibly take the heretic's place himself. But I was not living unto myself now, — please God I would not die unto myself. I made my resolve.

In March I wrote to Luther announcing my intention of visiting Rome, travelling rapidly, and returning to the North as soon as possible. The two years of my exile from Rome had long expired; I was informed His Holiness expressed surprise at my failure to return; I believed I could get at least one fair audience touching the cause I had so at heart, and if blessings should light on the peacemakers, blessings then should be mine.

I received a characteristic reply from Wittenberg; words I later learned Luther used in another letter to Dr. Spalatin, Elector Frederick's confessor. After thanking me heartily, he expressed no confidence in the success of my mission. He expected only anathemas and wars. "But I commit everything to God, and give up my bark to the winds and the waves. The battle is the Lord's. For do you think by *peace* Christ will advance His cause? I fear not. Has not He himself — have not all the martyrs — poured out their blood in the combat?" Then at the end he told how he would pray for me night and morning, as I fared on the long, long way.

The day after this letter came I called in Andrea, very suddenly.

"Andrea, make ready quickly. A long journey."

"Eccellenza goes again to Wittenberg?"

"To Rome."

The fellow almost swooned with joy. Then clapped his hands, sung, danced.

"Italy, Italy. Returning to the sunlight! Santa Maria, what a blessed day!"

"Do not exult too much. I shall not stay there. I go to plead with His Holiness in behalf of Dr. Luther. I must travel with as small a train, and as great speed as possible. I leave preparation to you. You understand?"

"To me, *si!* Eccellenza. I am proud of the honor. Am I not a Sienese, and when were they wanting?"

And he fulfilled his word. At dawn the next morning, after a very brief farewell with Moritz, I rode out of the Regenstein, with only Andrea and two other attendants. Rome was not to condemn the Wittenberg friar without one friend to plead his cause.

* * * * *

This is not a tale of far travel. My flight through Ger-

many, Switzerland, and Lombardy was almost as fast as we could relay our horses. At Genoa I took a local fulcenna for Civita Vecchia, and had a prompt and prosperous voyage. One evening we sighted what was feared to be a Barbary corsair, and we had chilly thoughts of a transport to Tunis and a round ransom; but the stiff breeze helped us to leave the strange sail behind. On landing, an easy stage brought us to Rome. Three years, nearly, since I had quitted it, and yet exceeding familiar: — the throngs of monks and clerics on the streets, the gay habits and uniforms on the Corso, the venerable ruins, the passing now and again of a cardinal's coach of state, the streets of sombre stucco-fronted palazzi. Only the piers of the new San Pietro had risen a little higher, and I was told Raffaello (who had just died) had completed still more masterpieces.

I was in Rome on no pleasure trip, but once there I had to survey the field ere acting. The Forlis, luckily, were on embassy in France, or I should have hesitated more about returning to Italy; but now since I had kept my former apartments I made myself quite at home, and Andrea was nigh beside himself with glee when he recognized them. As quickly as possible also I sent for my old tailor and had three suits of the latest fashion prepared, while Andrea hired the necessary horses and servants that I might affect all my old elegance.

Imagine me, then, breaking in upon my old companions. For three days I ran from palazzo to palazzo, to be met with effusive greetings and gossip at every hand. The Pope was near the city at his hunting lodge, and, I was assured, had asked repeatedly wherefore I did not return (my sentence having expired) to Rome. My business at the court I concealed for the nonce under polite talk about "private affairs." In a few days I had learned all that I wished to know, and could take action.

The Bull had not yet been signed by the Pope, although cast in its final form. A long wrangle among the Latinists as to its precise verbiage had delayed matters. "Its language, as well as its orthodoxy, must be beyond reproach." Eck and his Dominicans had clamored for instant anathemas, but a moderate party had insisted that Luther be given a last interval of sixty days wherein to recant. What I must do, I must do quickly. I resolved to request an interview with the Pope at his hunting lodge, and to this end I visited the Secretary of State, the Cardinale di Frascati.

I knew the illustrious prelate well, and he was in an amiable mood when they ushered me into his private camera. It was one of the first exceeding hot days. His Eminence lounged in a very informal dressing-gown upon a wicker chair. The windows were filled with linen in lieu of glass, and the tiled floor had just been sprinkled with water.

"Ah! my dear Gualtiero, for I renew the old familiarity," he began, my wish explained, "I am sure an interview can be arranged. His Holiness will rejoice to see you. But may I crave your motive?"

"Eminenza," I replied, with premeditated boldness, "I understand the reputation I have left in Rome."

"You ought, you mad fellow," he answered, laughing.

"I fear therefore what I shall say will be accounted a merry but ill-timed jest. Do me the favor to consider me wholly in earnest."

"Alas!" quoth he, mopping his brow; "I had hoped you came merely with pleasant gossip; but pray state this dreadfully serious business."

"Has your Eminence heard that I have written to Rome in behalf of the alleged heretic Luther?"

"It was a most cleverly sustained witticism. You played the *advocatus diaboli* to perfection."

"I may well have done so. I was in earnest."

The Cardinal dropped his handkerchief, and leaned back, staring at me.

"You seriously argue the case of that friar? that child of perdition, foe of the Church, of the spawn of Arius and Hus? You, whose frivolities are notorious?" I nodded. "Jupiter and all gods! Your reasons?"

"Very simple ones. Luther is a saint. He who raises a hand against him is accursed even as the Jews who stoned the kneeling Stephen."

He clasped his hands over his head. "Are my ears betraying me? *You* actually try to quote Scripture? Pray, when have you been seized with such miraculous piety?"

I took a step nearer to his chair.

"Hearken, Eminenza. I am not here to justify myself, but another. But this I will say for myself; I am not what I was once. I have seen, felt, suffered. I am no longer my old vain, idling, self-pleasing self. I have met in Germany a Man. And that Man has taught me that I at least have a work to do, and a life to live ere I render back my life and talents to God. It is in behalf of that Man I am in Rome, for his name is Martin Luther."

He beckoned for me to cease, but I would not.

"That Martin Luther has been denounced and anathematized here I know full well. He has not sought this quarrel. I know the beginning. The mad blasphemies of Tetzels which he denounced have been since denounced by many an honest Papalist. But because he dared to tie up the Pope's and the Archbishop of Mainz's dear money bags countless slanders were cast against his name. He is honest. He has sought diligently to justify himself. In that search he was perforce driven by his opponents to question many things beside the Indulgences. For this he was branded as 'heretic.' If it be heresy to seek earnestly for truth, then heretic he is, and so am I."

"*Pax!*" commanded the Cardinal, coloring slightly. "We are indeed in a noble argument. You forget your Luther had an ample opportunity to recant before Caietan, and scoffed at all the legate's benignity."

"A chance to recant if wrong, yes! But not to justify himself if in the right."

"How could he be in the right?" quoth His Eminence, with dignity; "the Church has spoken against him."

I had learned somewhat from my master of the value of boldness.

"But if the Church be wrong, so much the worse for the Church."

Frascati crossed himself in horror.

"That is blasphemous, even from you, Gualtiero. Are you turned so mad up there in the North that you expect to convince His Holiness and the whole Curia by arguments like this?"

"Not in the least."

"Then explain, for heaven's sake."

"I expect to tell His Holiness what no one yet has evidently dared to tell him. I would tell him that it is not with Martin Luther he deals, but with all Germany,—yes, and I dare swear with other lands, too; or, as God rules above us, I see such a bloody cleaving and sorrow to the Church as will make the old 'Babylonish Captivity' and the 'Great Schism,' and all the other sore troubles, but as a tale that is told."

The Cardinal rose with a kind of benignity, and laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"Impossible, Gualtiero; impossible. How can His Holiness be misinformed? I dare swear that you are crazed. You have read too much Seneca and Epictetus. Try Euripides and Propertius. If it will make you happier, you shall see the Pope to-morrow, but it will do as much good as a

bucket can to fill the sea. This hot weather has distracted you. Let us sit and talk of pleasanter matters, — the negotiations as to the new Spanish bishoprics, for instance. Try a little of this wine from my own estate, it is very good for afflictions of the head. What a mistake ever to let you go North!”

I spent an hour with him. I went away realizing clearly the probable futility of my mission. My temptation was to turn back without pressing for the Papal interview. But I was of the Regenstein ritters. It was better to fail, to perish, than to flee away.

CHAPTER XX

THE HOLY FATHER ORDAINS

DESPITE adverse omens, I omitted no precaution to improve my chances. I learned that the Bull against Luther was being cast in final shape by Cardinal Accolti after a contest with Cardinal Pucci, both jealous of their own skill as Latinists. The document might go to Leo at any moment for final action. I therefore at once despatched a messenger to the Pope's hunting lodge, La Magliana (six miles up the Tiber) requesting an immediate audience. As a token of loyalty I sent also a manuscript of the Third Philippic of Demosthenes, which I had purchased at Genoa, and which contained at least five paragraphs lacking in the best copy in the Vatican. I was rewarded by a speedy reply that "His Holiness would graciously see me to-morrow at noon in the interval between the morning and afternoon hunting."

In dealing with Leo, I at least understood my man. Any high moral appeal would be valueless, not because he was in any sense immoral or evil loving, but because he was essentially a temporal politician, despite a large admixture of the tastes of an æsthete. To make this clever, urbane, pleasure-loving son of Lorenzo the Magnificent comprehend the soul-searchings of Luther was a task beyond angels. Yet I believed Leo had his approachable side. "Let us then enjoy this Papacy, seeing that God has given it to us" had been his alleged remark when told of his election: and if only I could convince the very secular and ambitious prince that banning Luther was pouring oil on a truly great political

flame, he might still be turned aside to conciliation. This seemed my only chance.

In the morning I let Andrea dress me with the informal elegance befitting an informal interview.

"And my own livery to-day, Eccellenza?" he asked.

"None at all," I answered, and then even as his face lengthened and protests began, I cast a glance about to be sure my other valets were absent. "Andrea," I continued, a hand on his shoulder, "you will have other work. Either your master returns to you to-night the happiest man in Italy, or he will return wholly defeated. Yet not defeated only: every Dominican will be crying, 'To San Angelo with him.' Nay, they may think it a case for Orlando the Moor.¹ For it is no light thing which I risk this day. You will have ready fast horses, a few trusty varlets, travel money, passports, everything needful for a swift journey, so that I may leave Rome most suddenly before the Monsignori can form too many schemes against me. You understand?"

"*Si, si, Eccellenza!*"

He bowed so low I could see his nose sticking betwixt his legs. I knew I needed to say nothing more to him. Leaving him therefore to care for all I had suggested, I took my way out to La Magliana.

It was a pleasant ride on the Via 'Campana, some six miles along the right bank of the Tiber. I found that I was not alone in seeking an audience with His Holiness. To my surprise I fell in with no less a personage than the Archbishop of Bari, the original cause of all my adventures. I eyed him awkwardly for a moment, but he veiled his biretta affably, and drew his palfrey beside mine whilst our men cantered behind.

"Believe me, illustrious conte," he declared, "I have long since realized who was responsible for that little adventure

¹ The Pope's executioner.

three years ago — and — Santa Maria! — the prebend the Pope gave me then has more than paid for the shock to my feelings. Inasmuch as I understand you are no longer friendly with Forli, *certamente* you are again my very good friend."

So we chatted amiably and I was pleased indeed to learn that the game had been very abundant of late, for bad hunting meant that the Pope would be in most atrocious humor. "Indeed," Bari assured me, "only 'two cross-bows' this season can bring in a cartload of game — stags and deer, as well as pheasants and hares. His Holiness will be delighted to grant us all kinds of favors, the more so as he will be glad of our company as a foil to the sombre fellow who went out to him earlier in the day."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Why, Sylvestro Priario the Censor, to be sure. He carries the final draught of the Bull against Luther the Heretic."

"But the Pope can only consent to that in the full consistory."

"Of course. The formal consent then, but the informal consent, authorizing the notaries to have the document engrossed for the regular sealing and publishing — that can be given to-day; probably this noon before we depart. Ah! well — it was high time an end was made to the pestilent fellow. I presume you heard quite a little of him in Germany."

I fear my answer was evasive, and my whole conversation from this point stupid and wandering. I was letting my thoughts stray far indeed from that venerable river road in the green Italian country. I was thinking how that noon Leo de' Medici, in the intervals betwixt the hunting, was like to take that action which might affect the lives, thoughts, souls of generations yet unborn; might set cities flaming, armies marching; might array king against king, and na-

tion against nation. And all the while up in the far dome of the sky the larks were singing, and the laughing, barefoot peasant maids went by, driving on their sheep and tossing their bright cloaks to catch the eyes of our ogling serving-men.

* * * * *

I allowed Bari to go first to the audience, and he soon came out smiling, informing me that His Holiness was in excellent humor, having run down a notably tall stag that morning. "He gave me the abbey for my cousin almost before the words got out of my mouth!" he reported. And so after brief interval, the scraping and bowing gentleman-usher conducted me in, and I was again before the Pope of Christendom.

The room was a gracefully decorated, airy apartment, as became a hunting lodge. Perfumed air from the gardens blew in at the large open windows. The frescoes on the wall were by Giulio Romano, — nymphs and sea-gods on azure waves, the postures a little free, but not really scandalous. A polite buzz was proceeding from a little group of monsignori and secular noblemen who were standing around, all in suitable hunting costume. Two or three handsome pages were moving to and fro around a small, linen-covered table. In a high armchair, his plate before him, eating heartily, sat Leo de' Medici. The years had added to his corpulency and the heaviness of his features. He wore a gray Flemish jacket and high leather huntsmen's boots; a Spanish sombrero and a boar spear lay on the taboret beside him. As he looked up, I fell on both knees dutifully, and the usher's announcement sounded.

"His Excellency the Conte di Palaestro."

I was considering whether to approach and kiss the Pope's hunting boots, when His Holiness himself thrust back the armchair in rising. A broad smile overspread his face.

"Welcome, Gualtiero!" I heard his deep voice saying, and he did me the singular honor of extending his ring to be kissed, instead of advancing a foot.

As I rose from my salute, he seized my hands warmly, and looked about the room with all the rapture of a lad greeting a long lost boon companion.

"So long! So very long! And at last you are back. How I have missed you. How often I have execrated Forli and Rocca for involving you in that affair. I had thought of summoning you back to Rome earlier, but I knew that you would come of yourself. I was very sure of it. What a fortunate day! A great stag this morning, and now Gualtiero di Palaestro to join in the hunt this afternoon. Surely I say a lucky day!"

"If I may wax poetical," I replied, in my best Latin, releasing my hands and with another deep reverence, "the honor and fair fortune is entirely my own. Do I not see again Sol, the illuminer of the Earth, the terrestrial Apollo who sheds clear beams on mortal souls groping in their darkness, or if my metaphor be not too forced, do I not now reverence 'Leo,' who is no less the king of the kings of the world, than the four-footed 'Leo' is the king of beasts? I cry your Holiness's judgment upon my figures of speech."

"Excellent, Gualtiero, excellent," cried the Pope, sinking back into the chair which the pages promptly thrust again beside the table. "Your three years in that barbarous North have not ruined your excellent Latinity. After all" — this between large mouthfuls of his favorite peacock sausages — "your Germans are not so desperate. Your Magister Johann Eck, now in Rome, can speak very fair Latin — though a somewhat greasy, unkempt creature himself. But why talk of Germany, Gualtiero, why of Germany? *Peste!* What with the troubles I've been in touching the election of the Emperor (heaven grant he play me fair as to my getting

Ferrara !) and this heretic friar, I get no sleep nights. I grow thin, Gualtiero; yes, thin, though my chamberlains will not have it so, and pretend my garments show I am stouter. But away with such trifles now. You have come on a noble hunting day. I'm sure Cardinal Cornaro will lend you one of his horses for the afternoon, if your steed isn't suitable. And now while I eat you shall tell me how you have managed to pass three years away from Rome."

Thus bidden, I narrated to the Pope what I truthfully could of my doings in the North without trenching upon the topic of Luther, or the affair of Ilsa, and making much of the problems connected with my Regenstein vassals. I was hopeful the matter of the Bulls against the heretic would not be laid before Leo ere evening, and as a favored guest at the hunt I promised myself a thousand opportunities of opening the ticklish subject during the afternoon, when of a sudden I was interrupted.

Into the gay, informal company, like a shadow, intruded the black gown of a sombre figure I knew overwell — Sylvestro Priario the Censor. In his hand was a paper packet. With a gesture to an usher he moved to the table and stood silent, like a gloomy pillar, until he caught the Pope's eye; then proffered a silent genuflection and held out the document. Leo motioned for me to cease, and received the paper, beckoning simultaneously for writing materials.

"A moment, only a moment, Gualtiero. Then you may continue your fascinating adventures. You see how business pursues me even hither. I am obliged to authenticate briefs and the like even on hunt days. Was ever a pontiff so persecuted? Santa Maria — those saintly old Popes who fed the Colosseum panthers were better off! Well — give me the pen. Do I sign here?"

I felt the blood rush into my face. I knew my heart was beating wildly. I had at least expected a chance to present

my problem fairly, and without too great prejudice. But the crisis was none of my making. I must do what I could. I took a step nearer the table. My eye met the dark eye of Priario, and instinctively we exchanged hostile glances.

"Your Holiness," I said, "may I do a very bold and uncourtly thing? May I requite the marked graciousness you have just displayed to me by asking a most impertinent question, — may I know the nature of this paper presented by Monsignore Priario?"

The Pope looked up, surprised. One or two courtiers glanced at me curiously. I had indeed done something beyond all precedent.

"Why, indeed, Gualtiero, you strange fellow," rejoined His Holiness; "this is the new Bull *Exsurge Domine* against that firebrand Luther. I must sign it that it may be presented in full Consistory in a few days for ratification. Good heavens, man — why do you look at me thus strangely? Have you taken poison?"

I fell on my knees before the Pope's chair. I did my best to control my voice.

"Hear me, your Holiness. What I ask is surprising and beyond all precedent, yet for the Pope's own sake do I ask it. For many reasons I beg your Holiness not to assent to this Bull until I have been heard to the contrary. It was for this very boon that I begged for an audience."

A kind of jar, of mental shock, seemed passing around the chamber. The Pope looked at me in such amazement it was manifest he did not understand all that I had said. Only the hollow hard tones of Priario broke the momentary silence.

"His Holiness can hardly delay the notaries longer. The bull has been drafted with the uttermost care, and delayed too much already. The Conte di Palaestro certainly cannot claim the right to intervene in a matter strictly of theology."

The voice of the Censor broke the spell upon me. I rose. With *him* I could bandy words.

"Well said, Monsignore," I retorted, leaving Leo to recover his poise; "I intervene not in theology, but this is a matter of most mundane politics. Sorely disloyal were I to His Holiness, forgetful of all the favors showered by the Popes on the House of Palaestro, if I held my peace, when rash theologians prepare such temporal woe for the Holy See."

"Rash theologians?" interposed Priario. "Does the Conte call them 'rash' and deny the case one of theology when this Luther is clearly convicted of forty-one damnable theological errors, and of seducing his countrymen to beliefs worthy of Moslem infidels?"

"I argue not for his opinions, pious Sir," said I, standing haughtily, "though I have heard learned doctors commend them. I speak to His Holiness on other matters. Were Luther's errors tenfold, still would I ask this hearing."

"Blessed San Paolo!" ejaculated the pontiff, still gazing on me, bewildered; "are you returned just to set my court by the ears? You and the Censor eye each other like wolves."

"I have nothing against Monsignori," I responded respectfully, "but much against your Holiness's ill-informed and precipitate councillors."

"Precipitate?" cried the Pope. "Have we not deliberated informally and in Consistory until I am weary and ill? Your German Eck, and all the Italians — all with their jangling counsels? Do you think the drying up of my German revenues is so delightful that I would draw out the matter longer? Ask a new lordship for Palaestro; a chamberlainship at court; anything in reason. But no more of this accursed friar!"

"Your Holiness," I let a little steel ring in my voice, "when the French were in the land, and Charles VIII thun-

dered on to Rome, my Italian grandfather held our castle fast for St. Peter. My German father died at Ravenna fighting the Pope's battle. My sword has ever been at your Holiness's summons. Therefore I have a right to speak to the Pope in this high matter, despite the frowns of Monsignore Priario."

Leo laid down his pen. "Proceed," he commanded.

He twirled his thumbs and moved uneasily. Clearly he was not pleased at me, but I persisted.

"Your Holiness: you will graciously recall that through no volition of my own I was forced to return to my paternal estates in Germany. In Germany I was suffered to witness the very birth-pangs of this controversy that now vexes the Holy See. I beheld the doings of Tetzal, and if ever a robber clutched for money, he was that robber." Next, briefly as I might, I told how Luther was drawn into the great debate, and how he had acted from the purest of motives, concluding, "then the storm spread. Luther is human. He has met attack with attack. Confronted with anathemas where he had expected comfort, what wonder he has denounced many things — even the Pope's prerogative — when your Holiness, ignorant of the true situation, has been unable to silence the braying tongues of angry busybodies."

"A word," interposed the darkly frowning Priario; "let me ask the Conte this: even conceding, what is impossible, that Tetzal were indeed a most indiscreet, nay objectionable, man, if this friar were truly a devout son of the Church, would he not rather 'cover the nakedness of his Mother' — as commends the Scripture, and endure in silence, than blazon abroad this great scandal to the undermining of faith and the confounding of the pious laity?"

"If your question needs an answer, Monsignore," I rejoined with acidity, "you can know best whether St. Peter Damiani, Pope Gregory VII otherwise called Hildebrand,

and St. Bernard of Clairvaux endured in silence the evils they saw rending the Church? Do Christians so ill then to venerate these saints?"

The Pope had been following me keenly. The thrust of my answer was not lost to him. His face lighted as Priario winced, and his tone was more friendly.

"A good arrow, Gualtiero. You always were clever in argument, although to hear *you* wage war for this fellow makes me misdoubt my ears! But you said you had no theological reasons for me, but only worldly ones — how is that?"

"Your Holiness is good to correct me. I am not here to excuse Martin Luther. I am here to say this, — I have been in Germany now many months. I have met men and women of all ranks and conditions, — princes, nobles, burghers, peasants, as well as clergy and monks. Your Holiness has been ill-served by your agents and newsmongers. A spirit of hostility against the Holy See exists in Germany that I fear the Pope's intimates have been too selfish courtiers to report to him truly."

"Good God!" ejaculated Leo, flushing, "do you tell me I am so hated! Wherein have I oppressed the Germans, pray? I surely sent the 'Golden Rose' to the Elector of Saxony. Ungrateful fellow not to surrender Luther in return for it!"

"Your Holiness is not hated personally. I have heard you called 'a lamb in the midst of wolves.' But the hatred against the Holy See, against the system of Papal Revenues, the disposition of Church offices in Germany by the Pope's intimates, against many other things connected with Rome, is blown up very fierce. I have heard many Germans assert it were time to cast off allegiance to Rome altogether and set up a national church for themselves."

The Pope's thick lips twitched, Priario's face grew black

as thunder, and he broke out with: "Santa Maria! That is schism, blasphemy, and heresy all in one. Do we live again in the days of Arius and Donatus?"

"These are not pleasant words, your Holiness, not the words of a servant craving your high favor," I drove on desperately, "but the words of a servant who speaks sober truth. The whole land of Germany is ready to rise against the Church and the Holy See even as a hundred years ago Bohemia rose, only the blaze will be twenty-fold hotter, even as Germany is greater than Bohemia."

"You exaggerate, Gualtiero," replied Leo, trying strenuously, it seemed, to recover his easy poise, and appear calm. "I'm sure you exaggerate. It is true Miltitz and Caëtanus have written somewhat of a misguided feeling in this heretic's favor, but nothing like to this. You are bewitched, Gualtiero. You always were a fellow of enthusiasms and fancies. A few days in the Trastevere with the pleasant donnas there will cool your brain and make you think better of yourself —"

I fear I cut the Pope short with an impatient gesture.

"I am aware, your Holiness," I declared, "how little my past life gives weight to my present mission. Yet this one thing I entreat. Postpone signing this paper. Give me formal audience to-night. Hear me with that calm wise judgment which makes Leo de' Medici honored and respected as wise, no less than holy, throughout the world. You will then see that I talk no folly when I urge, 'delay, do not enkindle all Germany, which is ready to rise in behalf of this friar.'"

"Do you talk indeed seriously, Gualtiero," said the Pope, looking at me shrewdly.

"By the soul of my father and mother I do."

"I do not like it," repeated Leo, "I do not like it. The fellow has had every consideration. I remember what Caëtanus wrote to Rome: 'I will argue no more with that beast. Those eyes of his are too deep-set in his head, and

his looks have too much meaning in them.' He is clearly a heretic. If I spare him now, all Rome will laugh at me."

"A less serious calamity, your Holiness," I ventured, "than to anathematize him, and have the anathema end in empty thunder, amid a great German schism."

Leo again knotted his fingers painfully. He was manifestly in sore doubt.

"Priario," quoth he, after a pause, "what do you reply?"

The legalist's slow jaws opened sententiously. "Holy Father, the Conte has argued of things impossible. Germany will not espouse the cause of this desperate friar. If Germany did, her fate would become a by-word and hissing through Christendom. As Vicar of Christ and responsible to God for the feeding of His sheep, your duty is plain. Let me cast it in a syllogism. *Prima*, the Church plainly teaches heretics must burn. *Secunda*, Luther is manifestly a heretic. *Conclusio*, Luther must burn! No other answer is possible."

"Well, Gualtiero," asked the Pope nervously, "what have you to say?"

"That Luther is not a heretic until the Pope formally declares him such, and there are many reasons why this should not be done."

"Ah, if I had not to decide! If I had not to decide!" Leo's hesitancy was painful to behold. The apartment was very still. Priario and I stood silent. Then all unwarned a clear, sweet blast from a huntsmen's bugle pealed in at the casement. Long and silvery it rang,—the summons for the grooms to prepare the horses for the afternoon chase. As at an omen the Pope seized the pen. Even as the notes died I saw him signing the packet. He cast it from him with a sigh of relief.

"The hunt is waiting. I can dally no longer. Your arguments are impossible. *Fiat justitia!* Let the heretic burn."

Priario's eyes shot flames of triumph, as he caught up the paper.

"ROME HAS SPOKEN!" he proclaimed so that all could hear him.

"Rome has spoken," I answered him, a little hoarsely, "but mark you, Monsignore, Germany will speak to-morrow."

* * * * *

That evening, just at sundown, I turned on my horse as my company rode up the Janiculum. By the church of San Pietro in Montorio we halted for a moment. Below me in the evening light I saw spread far the Holy and Eternal City, the domes and towers of the churches, the great mass of the Vatican, the tawny pile of the Colosseum, the innumerable palaces, the monuments of eld; behind all, the Latin hills and the deepening blue and gold of the Italian sky. My heart was stirred. I knew I was leaving Rome and Italy forever.

Unhappy Leo, generous prince, munificent art patron, lover of poetry, kindly master! How as secular king or Emperor would not thy name be praised!

And thou, O Italia! Italia! thou with thy hot bright beauty, beauty of sky and mountain and river, beauty of artist, of sculptor, of poet, thou land set to lead the world up to the God-like, thou to whom God hast given every grace, every talent! Over thee Christ must have wept as over Jerusalem, having promised to cherish thee "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, — and thou wouldest not."

For thou, O! Italia, hast cast thy birthright away. Thou hast burned Savonarola, thou hast endured the infamies of the Borgia, thou hast humbled thy body to France and Spain, thy soul to the worldlings who know not Christ. Therefore thy crown passes to the North, and men perhaps shall come from far, to wander through thy storied cities, to gaze

on thy eloquent pictures, and to return, journeying away from the pageant of thy fading past to their lands of the potent present. . . .

“Ride on, Andrea,” I commanded; “We are going back to the Regenstein.”

CHAPTER XXI

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

I HAD failed, and I did not conceal from myself one reason why I had failed. My past life and reputation had detracted from the weight of my arguments, rather than strengthened them. That I was stark mad, or perhaps the subject of demoniac possession was the firm impression (I afterwards learned), of most of my friends in Rome. Letters informing me as much and chiding me for "casting away the fairest chance that ever a man had of winning the Pope's favor," overtook me whilst I tarried at Vicenza, breaking my journey north. I had done well to leave Rome suddenly, otherwise I would surely have been placed under some restraint as a lunatic, whose folly took the form of heresy.

From Vicenza I wrote to my Venice bankers, bidding them to sell all my estates and property in Italy to the first fair purchaser, and remit me the proceeds against goldsmiths' bills on Augsburg. With the South I had finished. I dropped the title of Palaestro from my style, and for better or worse I reëntered Germany as only the "Graf von Regenstein."

Even after so brief an absence I could see how the spirit of excitement and enthusiasm for Luther had swelled. At Tübingen I met the latest pamphlet by Ulrich von Hutten, the prince of the German poets and Humanists, who had flown to the cause of Luther. His pen had been surely dipped in gall. In his biting invectives were embodied all the implacable hate which had been accumulating among the men of the North against the Papacy.

Thus ran some of the "triads" in his *Vadiscus, or the Roman Trinity*.

"Three things abound in Rome; antiquities, poison, and ruins.

"Three things the Romans trade in; Christ, church offices, and women.

"Three things everybody wants in Rome; short masses, good gold, and a merry life.

"Three things are most praised yet are most rare in Rome; devotion, faith, and innocence.

"Three things a pilgrim usually brings back from Rome; a soiled conscience, a sick stomach, an empty purse.

"Three things are most feared in Rome; that the princes get united, that the people begin to open their eyes, and that Rome's frauds come to light.

"Three things only can set Rome right; the determination of the princes, the impatience of the people, and a host of Turks at her doors."

Here I have given only some of the mildest of his onslaughts. Everybody was reading them. Everybody was believing them. Ploughboys and tapsters stood around their more literate companions while they conned aloud the latest pamphlet of the great debate. Glorious Johannes Gutenberg, what a debt to thee and thy printer's art, owe all who love truth, justice, and the freeing of the human soul!

But Hutten had not spoken alone. Louder and clearer than his sounded the voice from Wittenberg. Dr. Luther had anticipated the tardily fashioned Bull. The Wittenberg printing-presses had scattered his pamphlets to wide Germany. It was not to the learned Latinists that he was speaking now. "The time for silence is gone, and the time for speaking has come." So in the words of Ecclesiastes, did the Augustinian friar begin his "*Address to the German Nobility*," — the work that more than any other one book

split Christendom into two hostile camps. On July 20, 1520, just as I was reëntering Germany, it was published. I met my first copy a few days later at Nuremberg. I remember sitting up late into the night in the hot room of my inn to finish it. In the morning I discovered that five other guests in the selfsame inn had burned out their candles doing the like. Men could talk of nothing else. I was not amazed to hear that very soon the presses of Leipzig and Strassburg were busily reprinting.

I fear that if I had seen this book before seeking my audience with Leo I would have turned back silent, and hazarding nothing. The Wittenberg preacher had thrown away the scabbard. Such plainness of speech had not been used against Rome since pagan emperors had ceased to persecute. I leave to historians and theologians to tell our children's children of this book. Cold enough seems the invective now, perhaps, as the fleeting years bring us German Protestants slothful safety. But let it be read as I and a million others read it, — with the great issue trembling on the brink, with the vast fabric of the One Catholic Church and the One Vicar of Christ its head tottering as to their fall, — old rooted ideas and beliefs, things men had sucked in with their mothers' milk, things men had learned to believe as certainly as that the sun crosses the sky toward the west, all these in short seemingly about to perish, and *then* perchance some of the glow and battle spirit might come, some of the hope, fear, trembling, exaltation.

When I read that "the government of the Pope agrees with the government of the apostles as well as Lucifer with Christ, hell with heaven, night with day, and yet the Pope calls himself Christ's Vicar," how could my memory fail to race back to the scenes just witnessed at Rome? I read on and on, involuntarily nodding my head with approval at even the fiercest invective. I was in no mood to analyze

the argument, to weigh the justice of each specific criticism, of each suggested improvement in churchly discipline. Nothing seemed spared. Saints' days, masses for the dead, fasting, begging pilgrimages, a thousand other things all were written down in one fiery condemnation. And I smiled when I read "Heretics should be overcome with books, not with fire, else the hangmen would be the most learned doctors in the world, and there would be no need of study."

"Ah! Monsignori by the Tiber," quoth I, "you will not be pleased to have doctrines like that prevail."

I remember casting the little book upon my pillow, and leaping up with a laugh which awakened Andrea, who was sleeping on a pallet near the door.

"Parried! Parried fairly," I cried; "the sword of Rome is blunted on the war-club of Germany. Behold the answer to the Papal Bull!"

* * * * *

A few more days of hard riding brought me to Wittenberg. The Elbe country was all in the green and glory of ripening summer. A golden haze filled the evening as I cantered over the plain and saw the great tower of the Schloss-kirche looming ever higher. The honest peasantry were trudging homeward from the fields. Their genial "Gruss Gott" was welcome to my ears. All was peace and quietude. Rome and its atmosphere of ostentatious elegance, suppressed intrigue, polite scandal, pagan learning, almost faded from my ken. I rode up the street of the little city. The lamps were being lighted. A few students were trolling a hearty catch in one of the taverns. Leaving the horses to be taken by my servants to the Castellan's I went alone and unannounced to the Augustinian convent. Familiarity made me enter boldly. I mounted the stairway and threw open the door of Dr. Luther. It was the same room that I had entered on an October evening almost three years before, — the green tile

stove, the solid chairs, the great solid table. Only around the open lattice vines were climbing, and I caught a heavy perfume from the convent gardens. The room was very dim, but I stopped involuntarily as I crossed the threshold. Dr. Luther was kneeling on the praying stool in one corner before a tall, bare, wooden cross. He was praying softly aloud. I could not catch the words, but stood awestruck, reverent, for no small time. Presently he arose and turned. His bold, strong face seemed to shine out upon me from the gloaming. Then of a sudden he saw me.

"Walter! *Ach! Liebe Gott!*"

He ran up to me, and almost crushed me with his powerful embrace. Then he led me to the window-seat, and sat for some moments holding both my hands, and pelting me with questions, so rapidly that I could hardly answer one, ere he had discharged another.

"Oh! dear Lord Jesus Christ!" he cried at length, "what have I, poor Brother Martin, done, that the noble Graf von Regenstein should run this peril for my sake?"

"The peril was nothing, but I am come back a beaten soldier. I have failed."

"Yes, the Bull is issued. Good! Asses must bray, wolves howl, and cardinals clamor for a poor German's blood. Heaven has made it so. We cannot complain."

"Yet consider, dear Dr. Martin, who and what will save us now?"

"*Us?* 'Me' you intended to say."

"Us, for am I not one with you for life and for death?"

He was silent for an instant, then the grip on my hand was renewed. "I have not deserved this. I cannot involve noble friends. The cause will triumph, but very likely over my bones. It must not march over yours also."

"Dear Doctor," said I, "it is you who have taught me to seek God and to play the man and not the accursed fool.

It is 'us' from this time forth, though the Pope and every king rise up against us."

"I have not deserved this. I thank you." Then he reached to the table and took up a Psalter. "Let me say the forty-sixth psalm."

And in the gray twilight, with the book unopened before him, I heard his deep voice roll out the majestic Latin of the Vulgate.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Though the waters therefore roar and be troubled: though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted.

Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge."

We sat silent again for a long time when he ceased. The daylight faded. I shall no more forget that hour than I shall forget the scene in the hunting lodge with Leo de' Medici. A few years afterward Luther was to cast this psalm into a hymn which Germany, and many Christians afar, will verily sing forever, '*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott.*' . . .

Not that evening but in the clear warm morning sunlight was the final issue drawn. I was there with Philip Melancthon and Dr. Nicolaus Amsdorf, a careful young theologian who had become Luther's left arm, if Melancthon was his right. Dr. Martin had taken us on a walk through the brilliant green country down toward the swirling Elbe. As we walked out of the Eastern Gate two curly headed children, the boy and girl of some parishioner, ran out to their stalwart friend and nestled up by him, one on either side.

They went along with us for a while right merrily, talking about their school, their plays and how their big sister was going to marry a Dessau hops-merchant. Luther twined his big fingers in their long hair, pinched their red cheeks, and asked innumerable questions. Then he told them a story of how the night before he had dreamed of a bright and glorious city, wherein were a hundred million boys and girls like themselves with marvellous toys wherewith they never grew weary playing, and most beautiful clothes which never grew soiled. And he had asked a holy man present (he thought he was an angel), if the little folk of Wittenberg could some day enter into that city too? "Yes," had been the answer, "but many years hence, after they were grown up, and only then if they obeyed their parents, learned of their teachers, and loved the dear God."

Our artless companions listened open-eyed and trustful, ever asking for "more stories," until at last their attention was diverted by some gorgeous butterflies, and away they went, hot on the chase. Dr. Martin was looking after them very earnestly.

"Is it not written," he asked, "'of such is the kingdom of heaven,' and again, 'a little child shall lead them'? Good, they have led us here! And if it is not God who has led us to-day through them, I am sure it is not the devil. The devil is far too gloomy a gentleman to show his ugly nose on so fine a day. Come, Philip; come, all of us. Let us sit on these old timbers and deliberate, for we are not as the old Persians, who took advice only in their cups."

Before us was the rapid river, with here and there a brown, lumber-laden barge drifting toward Magdeburg. A northern wind made the open sun delightful. We sat for some time in a contemplative mood, saying little. At last Dr. Luther broke the silence.

"Hearken, noble and learned friends of a poor and simple

friar. Here I am told that a Bull has been fashioned against me at Rome. A Bull very terrible, such as princes and kings might well quake to have launched against them, let alone the son of poor Hans Luther, the miner of Eisleben. That being the case, if I am to save soul and body, tell me what I am to do, having neither soldiers nor gulden to avoid the onslaught?"

The words were lightly said, but I knew not so lightly meant. It was for no mere summer stroll we had been taken out that day. Amsdorf, ever cautious, began dryly.

"If you, dear Doctor, would indeed have sound council, you should assemble all your learned and discreet Wittenberg friends. We lack alike in years and wisdom."

But Luther laughed with a kind of irony. "A pest on learned and discreet friends! I will have friends who are bold and lusty, but not waxed over wise. A council of graybeards will buzz out as much wisdom as a wasps' nest. Three councillors suffice for many princes, and they shall suffice for me. What think you, Philip?"

Melanchthon stroked his thin beard.

"I was reflecting upon what the Roman Hadrian said upon his death-bed, if Cassius Dio reports him aright, 'Many physicians are the Emperor's death.' In numbers we are sufficient, but in sound judgment —"

"Away with your classic anecdotes. We are not in the lecture hall. I have led you here for reasonable council, and where is a better place for it than under God's blue heaven, where He can see and hear if all we say and think is aright? For no light matter methinks to go the road which we have undertaken. And if we are to traverse it, let it not be as blindfolded oxen goaded to the butcher."

"Proceed," we said together.

"Then let the king lay matters before his council. Our noble Walter von Regenstein here tells me, what is beyond

peradventure true, that a Papal Bull has been prepared and approved, and since his departure from Italy it has been beyond doubt officially published. It declares me a heretic, and with me all my adherents and favorers. It orders the burning of my books. Rumor says that I and my friends are given sixty days wherein to recant our errors and to burn our books; in other words, to surrender up our castle with even the innermost keep. Failing thereof we are cut off as 'withered branches not abiding in Christ,' and to endure that law concerning heretics which has been from ages provided, — the tenor whereof you know right well. Good, then, my noble masters; on which horn of the dilemma shall I sit down? For I am not the first honest monk to whom the paternal father at Rome has spoken, 'Turn or burn.'"

He looked from Amsdorf to Melanchthon, from him to me. We looked sheepishly upon the water. There was nothing hesitant in Luther's tone or manner, but we were reluctant to speak.

"Dear Doctor," at last I said, with a smile, "after the trumpet blast of your last pamphlet I do not see how we need seek for your answer."

"Ah, Walter," he replied, "you are right. And yet I will tell you — when I sit in my study among my books and think upon all the evils of the world, I am beside myself. How fortunate it is I am not God! If I were He, and had committed the government to my son, as He to His Son, and these vile people were as disobedient to him as they are now, I would knock the world in pieces. Therefore I would not renounce the Pope and all his minions whilst in some fine frenzy at my table, spitting out the fierce words with my ink. Not so. It is here — where all is peace, calm, sunlight, friendship, that I must do the deed. And no slight deed, I warrant."

We all watched his face. He seemed to care little for what

we said, but much that we should see that he was perfectly calm and collected.

"Dear friends," his deep voice continued, "so far have I gone, but yet I can go back. Better men than Martin Luther have burned their books at a Papal summons, and sung their palinode. And I: who am I to set my weak wisdom against all the learned men, the sainted doctors and sages who have confirmed the power of Rome?"

"Who are you?" cried I, while Melanchthon affectionately closed both his delicate hands around one of his master's great ones. "You are a prophet and saint, beside whom Aquinas and Albertus Magnus are unworthy to breathe the same air. Your word is truth. You cannot fail, or God fails with you!"

"Hear how the dear Graf Walter proves himself the adept courtier and flatterer, Philip," responded Dr. Martin. "He would make me think I was a prince or a cardinal if he could. But he speaks in one thing the truth. Of late I have come to know how it was that the apostle wrote, 'It is no more I that live, but Christ Jesus which liveth in me.' Oh! blessed assurance, such as no Pope can give, with all his power from his high throne. For thanks to God's word I am possessed by His Truth, and after that—what can man do unto me?"

"Dr. Luther," said Melanchthon slowly, "you know that it is yours to speak, it is ours to follow. Long since you have learned all that."

The Augustinian's spare form grew straighter as he sat. His hands pressed hard upon his knees, but his voice was calm when he answered us.

"Hear, then, comrades and beloved. The Church wherein I have been born and bred, the Pope whom I have been taught to reverence—these have cast me off, because I have been obedient to the voice of God. Graf Walter here, on the night of the theses, warned me of this. I would

believe nothing. How foolish of me — yet how well Heaven ordered it! For if I had taken fright then, how could I have learned now what manner of things the Pope and Rome are? Whether they get my body for the fire, whether an angel preserves me, matters little. For I am in the state even of Peter and of John when they said to the Jews: 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen or heard.' And I dare not answer save as they, lest in saving my body from the flames to-day, I commit my soul to the devil and his eternal fires to-morrow. Do you agree?"

In silence we looked on him, assenting. He reached down at his feet and plucked a long slip of pure green grass.

"I have heard," he continued, "that when the Crusaders were in the wastes of Palestine, with the foe awaiting them, and no priest able to administer the sacrament, they divided amongst themselves and partook of a bit of grass, as token that they were still true to one another, to their cause, and to the dear God. Shall we do the like?"

Together we nodded. His lips were a little pale as he broke the slip into four portions and gave one to each. We ate the morsel, looking out upon the welling river and the scattered clouds above it. Suddenly Dr. Luther rose, and his laugh seemed carefree and boyish.

"Oh! What a tale to tell. Oh! Who would ever have dreamed it — that I, a German miner's son and a friar, should give so foul a headache to the noble lords of the Vatican. Come, Philip; come all of us, back to Wittenberg. There is work enough waiting and to spare."

On the walk homeward I had never seen Doctor Luther more lively and genial. He was full of droll anecdotes of his schoolboy life at Eisenach and his student days at Erfurt. Melanchthon and Amsdorf, as well as myself, were inclined to

be pensive, but our master was able to make good spirits for all of us. When I was about to leave him at the convent, he was sitting down at his table with a huge leaden inkstand and a prodigious pile of paper before him.

"A stranger," said I from the threshold, "would think you were about to compile a wondrously learned lecture on the Categories of Aristotle."

He laughed as he nibbed his pen.

"Think of me as the Crusader about to fall upon the Paynim," he shot back; "behold my battle-axe! *Ach!* It is a mighty havoc, God willing, I will make to-night among our present-day Mussulmans from Italy!"

His pen began racing over the paper with marvellous rapidity. I stood for a time watching him. Occasionally he would turn hastily the leaves of his well-thumbed Bible to verify a text; once he reached for the Reuchlin's Hebrew Grammar. He speedily forgot my presence and wrote faster than ever. I saw him fling aside his first sheet.

"*Upon the Babylonian Captivity of the Church,*" it read in Latin. Another thunderbolt to rock the Vatican. Knowing that I could do nothing more that day, I went to my pleasant hosts at the Castellan's house.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FRIAR OF WITTENBERG ORDAINS

It was a real home-coming which I had to the Regenstein. There seemed to be affection as well as loyalty in the welcome all gave me, from Adolf down to Wache, the great boar hound. Graf Moritz rode over from Blankenburg with a brotherly greeting. By painful economy and management he was putting his estates in tolerable order, and paying off his father's debts to the Frankfort Jews, and I was glad to see his face growing less care-worn.

A few days, however, after my return, an incident occurred which jarred me painfully. One afternoon as I sat writing in my cabinet a deputation of four of my chief dependants came scraping and bowing, — two petty nobles, and two well-to-do peasants, who rejoiced in the title of "Schöffe." On my granting permission, the spokesman, a lean, long-winded rascal, entered upon a lengthy eulogium upon my gracious governance, but then added that my loving subjects had been much grieved by my repeated absences from the lordship, "the more especially as I had no direct heir for the Regenstein, and in event of any accident or foul hap, which God and the saints forefend! — the whole country would pass to my very distant kinsfolk in Brandenburg."

"And therefore?" I demanded.

"That your most noble Grace will in benignity condescend to the loyal representations of your devoted liegemen, and speedily take to yourself a noble wife, who will be mother to

a worthy posterity. The Graf von Wernigerode has two marriageable and comely daughters, and we do most humbly represent —”

My Christian virtues had not been so cultivated at Wittenberg as to prevent my gorge from rising.

“Hear you, sirrah!” I thundered. “Loyal subjects never masque as busybodies! I suffer you to pick your own wives — be as good to your Graf and master. When I would marry it will be time enough to have you in as my august councillors.”

Four very sheepish “notables” shuffled out of my apartment. But the incident cut me to the quick, the more as I knew all the countryside was saying behind my back what these oafs had ventured to my face. In fact, Moritz on his second visit again blurted it out.

“*Donnerwetter*, Walter Don’t you see how you will never be happy here in the North till you have somewhat to hold you? You know what I wished for Ilsa? Well — the cat has lapped up that cream long since, but there is more elsewhere. What with your wealth and breeding, you might look for a great prince’s daughter; but Gräfin Elisabeth of Wernigerode —”

“Good heavens, Moritz,” cried I, suffering him no further; — “are you also in the conspiracy against me?”

“Conspiracy, no! Friendly truth. She is of the best of our Harz nobility, piously bred, tall as a pine, and as lovely. Her father announces a very ample dowry. There could be nothing more fortunate.”

Here, however, he stopped, halted by the pain that surely flashed from my eyes. I put my hand on his knee.

“Good comrade,” said I, “you mean your words for the best, and I will strive hard not to be angry. In the very spirit you name — friendly advantage — I said that I sought your sister’s hand. It is everywhere the same. ‘Passion for

a sweetheart, cold calculation in picking a wife.' In Italy, Germany, in France or Spain, that is the kind of a union the Church blesses. But your sister, Ilsa von Blankenburg, thought otherwise, and she was right. Rather than take me, as I made my chilly proffer, she sought the convent. And now how may I do this wrong to Elisabeth von Wernigerode or any woman else?"

"Romance — worthy of a minnesinger!" he laughed in my face. "Awake, man! Dwell not in minstrel's dreams, but in realities."

"Yes," I tossed back bitterly; "in desperate realities I live, right truly. And now I say somewhat that may startle you."

"Discharge your culverin," he ordered, watching me intently.

"I will wed your sister Ilsa, or I will wed no woman."

"Holy God!" he exclaimed, crossing himself; "are you proclaiming a vow of celibacy, or are you mad? Whatsoever may befall Luther, nuns have been nuns since Christians have been Christians. On what do you base your hope?"

"I cannot tell," I answered, with a fierce gesture, rising and pacing feverishly. "In that Book which Luther teaches me to read is written 'Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' We stand on the threshold of changes beyond human imaginings. Since quitting Italy, night after night I have seen some one in my dreams — your sister. We are always together. We are holding each other's hands, we are looking into one another's faces, we are growing old joyously together as husband and wife. There is enough Southern blood in me still to believe in signs and presages. I cannot tell how it will all come to pass. I will do the task that comes to hand — and hope."

"Alas! poor Walter," said he, shaking his head; "you might dream better of the pot of gold beyond the moon

than that Quedlinburg convent will ever give you an honorable bride."

"I am doing nothing rashly," said I, reassuring him: "my deeds shall be deeds of reason, but my thoughts are not to be ruled by schoolman's logic."

So we dropped the sore topic, and talked of the new Emperor and whether he could long maintain the peace with France. Nevertheless, that night I sent my quondam outlaw Gunter away on a private mission. He was to steal back to Quedlinburg and ascertain from his daughter Trude what was the gossip among the nuns touching the abbess's niece.

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But now for me began a period of intense activity. Not lightly had I taken that strange pledge with the other three that summer's day, beside the rushing Elbe. If Luther and the Cause were to be saved, they were not to be saved by letters from learned doctors, nor by the plaudits of students and worthy peasants. One thing I knew in last resort would halt the vengeance of the now roused Vatican, — the "thou shalt not" of the German princes and free cities, backed by the armed hand. In Italy I had failed. In Germany I did not fail. During the following months I was but little at the Regenstein. My mission carried me to almost every princely court in North Germany. Sometimes I was turned away with scant courtesies, but not always. If Elector Frederick of Saxony sent word to Luther to remain in Wittenberg, at a moment the hard-pressed friar was preparing to flee the land, I had my modest part in winning the favor of His Electoral Grace. I was in constant correspondence with Spalatin, the Elector's confessor. Not a few influential Grafs and Freiherrns were changed from wavering friends to hearty supporters by my poor efforts. Perhaps it was thanks to me that young Philip, Markgraf of Hesse, so early gave his support to the Cause and its leader. I had

like fortune at the ducal courts of Brunswick, Lüneburg and Mecklinburg. I argued the case of Luther before the lordly Burgomasters and Councillors of mighty Lübeck, the queen city by the Baltic — and not in vain.

My travels even carried me to distant Prussia, to the confines of the German land; and there in his glorious Marienburg, true Kaiser among castles, I met Prince Albrecht, Grand-Master of the Teutonic Knights, and talked till the candles were deep in their sockets, pleading the cause of Germany against Italy, of the Wittenberg prophet against the black gowns of Rome. And here too I think my seed was destined to bear a harvest. Then as I labored, and imagined I saw my labors crowned with a fair success, I felt my soul rise buoyantly within me. I knew that the forsaking of Italy had been no rash mistake, that I could mock at my old companions when they wrote to me from the South "thou fool."

As I went to and fro, I knew that Luther's pen had never been more active. In October the presses had begun to clang with the great *Babylonish Captivity* pamphlet, — a true trumpet-call to battle. Almost simultaneously came *The Freedom of a Christian Man*, wherein was set forth the peace, joy, liberty, possessed by him who had cast off the old Church and its bondage. Then pealed another clarion, — the last *Letter to the Pope*, wherein the peasant's son spoke to the Holy Father in tones never heard by Pope before. Clearly he told Leo de' Medici that it was not he in person, but the Vatican and the evils it perpetuated, against which he aimed.

"The Church of Rome, one time most holy of all churches, has become the lawless den of thieves, the very kingdom of sin, death, and hell, so that not even Anti-Christ could devise addition to its wickedness. Meantime you, O Leo, are sitting as a lamb amid wolves, — what resistance can you alone make to these monstrous woes!"

Violent? Most surely. But let those who would have had Luther speak softly and sweetly, tell whether the Monsignori have ever yielded jot or tittle for all the fair arguments in the world? When a battle is joined, strong men do not let blood with needles.

Presently, after due rumors, the Papal Bull was published in Germany. Eck had brought it North with a kind of triumph. He had caused to be inserted in the Bull the names of several controversialists, who were his personal foes, some of whom were no intimate friends of Luther. To intrust the publication of the Bull to Eck, the most unpopular man in Germany, was simply another of those blunders whereby the Vatican spun its own skein of troubles. Where a prince-bishop or the Dominicans were influential it was published amid sullen silence, and in a few such towns Luther's books, blazed in little bonfires lit by the common hangman (which bonfires added to the sale and reading of the heretical books exceedingly). But in North Germany many a duke or burgher-master let the mob pluck the offensive paper from the church door and rend it to pieces amid shrill curses. So it was actually treated by the students even in monk-ridden Leipzig. Yet everywhere men asked me, "How will the friar answer?" For answer was expected, and rightly. Early in December I received this letter, while passing through Dresden.

Martin Luther to his dear friend in Christ, the noble Graf Walter von Regenstein: —

Come to Wittenberg by the 10th, without fail. I have a song to sing, and a deed to perform which you must hear and see.

Farewell.

I guessed the purpose of the summons. Little was the need again to urge my coming. I entered Wittenberg on the evening of the ninth, and almost as my horse went under the

gate, a friendly student thrust in my hand a printed bill. I give it word for word.

All Friends of Evangelical Truth

are summoned about nine o'clock to the Church of the Holy Cross beyond the city wall.

At that place, according to ancient apostolic usage, the godless books of the Papal constitutions and the Scholastic Theology will be burned; inasmuch as the presumption of the enemies of the Gospel has gone so far that they have cast the godly, evangelical books of Luther into the fire.

Let all earnest students attend this sight, for now is the time when Anti-Christ must stand revealed.

The air of the small city seemed charged as before a thunderstorm. Men stood in little knots upon the street talking in low whispers. Now at last the dullest and feeblest who had said "peace, peace," knew that peace was not to be, that Christendom was to be rent into two hostile camps, a schism that might endure far beyond children's children.

Freiherr von Steinitz greeted me with his usual cordiality at his stately home, but he and his good lady were alike touched by the common sentiment. We sat silent and pensive by his well-piled table. At last he gave a forced laugh.

"Do you remember that evening of your first coming more than three years ago, and how I asked who would bell the cat, meaning Tetzl?"

"Certainly."

"Saints and angels! Who would have imagined that after belling the cat, it must needs prove necessary to bell Leo, the lion! God grant we do not all make the beast a fine meal ere it is over; but it is Heaven's way, not ours.

Luther is a prophet of God, if ever Moses or Elijah were such. Live or die, we are with him."

And I think Von Steinitz spoke the mind of all Wittenberg that night. At the Augustinian convent later I found Luther and Melanchthon with a few friends. Their tongues were going briskly. Dr. Martin even ventured the catch of a song.

"I was certain of your coming, Walter," was his greeting when I entered. "The devil will try very hard to-morrow to make us sad and down-hearted. So we will prove our trust in God by abundance of good talk and music, for I am sure the angels are better pleased by seeing men happy, than by fasting or lying all night in the shape of a cross.

I sat down with the company. My gloomy mood fled. I told of my adventures and successes in Mecklenburg and Prussia. Melanchthon was charming, with his classic wit and apt quotations; even the serious Amsdorf was merry.

"What a pleasant evening was this," said Dr. Martin when I left him. "Why cannot the fine cardinals at Rome and the Dominicans leave a poor rascal like myself alone; then I could always sit with Philip by the stove, with a little beer and the good word going? But we must have very hard and strait words to-morrow."

The morning of the short winter day dawned gray and tolerably warm. A damp mist was driving across the Elbe marshlands, and above it the towers of the two Wittenberg churches and the tops of the tall poplars by the river loomed like great dim cones floating upon clouds. Long before the time set, the crowds were in motion, from Von Steinitz in his fur-lined cloak, and the pompous city "Honorability" to the begging itinerant students, ragged at knee and elbow. All lectures had ceased in the University. Down Collegienstrasse we streamed, a silent, thoughtful multitude. The

mist had lifted a little by the time we passed the eastern Elster-gate, outside of which stood the little Chapel of the Holy Cross. Hard by was a small pest-house used in days of the plague, and before it an open space where infected clothing had been burned. On this appropriate spot the zealous students had heaped dry wood, well soaked with pitch—a goodly pyre.

We stood in a wide circle, drawing our cloaks about us, while waiting the little procession from the Augustinian Convent. There was no long delay. About a dozen of Luther's theological friends, capped and gowned according to their masterships and doctorates, accompanied their friend and leader. He carried his head high, and his body a trifle rigid. Never had I seen a deeper light in his eyes. No elaborate ceremonies delayed him. Perhaps by the mere simplicity of his act he desired to mark the antithesis to the ponderous ceremonial and procedure of the Church whereon he was declaring war. The crowd opened to let him pass. His arms were full of books,—I could guess their titles, "Gratian's Decretals of the Canon Law," "Thomas Aquinas," "Albertus Magnus," and the other great schoolmen whose teachings had been to Rome a front and rear ward. Silent stood we all, while he advanced and laid them on the pyre, then stepped back. A man in a master's robe appeared with a firebrand, and cast it far into the pyre. The flames caught instantly. They mounted crackling toward the winter heavens. Soon they roared in a mighty blaze. Then we saw Dr. Luther approach again. From under his cloak he drew a scroll and held it aloft that all might witness—those near enough could behold the Papal arms, and the seal of Leo de' Medici. It was the Bull of Excommunication. Out into the flames he flung it, as one would fling a snake, while his great voice sounded to the confines of the breathless crowd:—

"Because thou has troubled the Holy One of God, may the eternal fire consume thee!"

The Pope had excommunicated Martin Luther. Martin Luther had excommunicated the Pope.

He stood a little while in a kind of revery, watching the dancing fire until books and scroll had glowed away to ashes; then amid a tense silence of the people he wrapped his black cassock about him, and followed by his friends went quietly back to the convent.

After his going, much of the multitude dispersed; but the students long kept up the sport, feeding the fire, casting on the flame numerous pamphlets of Luther's enemies, and singing mock funeral hymns over the dying embers. The next day Dr. Martin reproved the students for their levity, after what had been a solemn and sacred act, adding intently: "If, with your whole heart, you do not separate from the dominion of the Pope, you cannot be saved. In this wicked world I would rather endure all perils, than, by silence, burden my conscience with the account which I must render unto God."

Such was that 10th of December, and the more I meditate on the thing then done the more I marvel at the manner whereby Heaven allowed that weak friar to bring great deeds to pass. Other Papal Bulls had been burned before — by mighty monarchs. Henry IV, in his imperial pride, had thundered against Roman domination, and Henry IV had knelt in the snows at Canossa, seeking abjectly the pardon of the stern Vicar of Christ. Luther, the peasant's son, went to no Canossa. He fared to Worms, and God fared with him.

CHAPTER XXIII.]

I MEET ABBESS THECKLA

Now that Rome had shown its hand, and Luther his, no man could doubt what would come to pass, — that pressure, ecclesiastical and political, would be brought upon the young Emperor Charles to consign Luther without further hearing to the fiery pains and penalties of heresy. "Rome had spoken," and the only official duty for the secular prince was to execute the clear law of the land against the convicted misbeliever. But despite the clamors of the Papal nuncios at Aachen, where Charles was solemnly crowned, they could not for the moment have their way. The Emperor, we began to realize, was no friend of the new religion; but youth as he was, he was not so rash as to begin his reign by an act of violence that might array his subjects in armed revolt. Also the desires of Elector Frederick (to whom he largely owed his throne) were not to be waived aside.

As for Frederick, I soon heard how the olive-faced Italian nuncios were full of insolence and threatenings, when they met him at Cöln, and strove to browbeat him into giving Luther up incontinently. "The Pope," quoth one, "can say to the Emperor, 'Thou art a day-laborer,' and it will be so." And behind the Elector's back they sneered, "we will find a way with your Duke Frederick." But the good Elector, masterfully slow and cautious, answered mildly that *if* Luther had written wrongfully against the Pope, he was exceeding sorry, but that as for the Bull it had been issued without any proper hearing of Luther's cause; so let the

alleged offender have a trial before 'just, learned, pious, and unsuspected judges,' and his fate could be considered after he was convicted.

Over these utterances of the honest Saxon the Italians were fain to gnash their teeth; but they had at hand neither armies nor lightning bolts. The heretic still warmed himself at Wittenberg. I knew Frederick had been the more confirmed in his studious inertia by his conference with the famous Erasmus. "Wherein has Luther erred?" asked the Elector. "In two great things," replied the scholar; "he has attacked the Pope's crown and the monks' bellies." Whereupon Frederick smiled and lapsed into that silence which proved so golden.

So far the Vatican had been checked by sheer passivity, but this could not last forever. In January the Diet of the Empire would meet at Worms. All the Papal influence would be used to order the destruction of Luther. There it would be settled whether the hero of Germany was to burn at the fiat of a worldly Italian; and we all girded our loins, took courage from the past, and made ready each one of us to play his part for the Cause and its champion.

Yet, in the midst of my greatest activity, riding post from Wittenberg to Brunswick, thrusting myself on ducal councillors, dictating letters to a wearied secretary, I sometimes asked myself, "What means all this to me?" What if Germany were redeemed from the shadow of Rome, a new hope dawned upon the land — what profit for myself? Had the Cause demanded a dash into battle to die on serried Swiss pikemen, I would have charged — how gladly! But to live on, to have the days of triumphant excitement pass, and the long slow years of painful upbuilding creep heavily, — what would they bring to me?

I fought away the question. I added to my Bible formulas the wise adage, "take no thought for the morrow, for the

morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." From Plato, Marcus Aurelius, and Plutarch I could add a score more of philosophic precepts. Often my mind recurred to my rash utterance to Moritz at the Regenstein touching his sister. Why could I not command my dreams? Even if immemorial law and custom had not made Ilsa von Blankenburg to me even as the dead, what season was this for thoughts of marrying and giving in marriage? Tradition, reason, religion, were alike against me. Was I not wedded to the Cause and that only? And yet, — I saw her almost every night.

I leave my case to be diagnosed by philosophers and deep physicians. If I was paler than when I first entered Germany, it was, heaven knew, because I had had enough concern for Dr. Martin! I was passing through Minden after a tolerably satisfactory mission to the Council of Bremen when a thing took place which set all my head aglow, and taught me how I truly stood, how under high thoughts for the Cause I harbored plenty of plain human passion.

In the square before the grave old cathedral stood the familiar pillory and gallows, and here, it being a prince-bishop's residence, the public hangman, a villainously visaged fellow, attended by a few approving priests, was casting upon a small fire sundry pamphlets, which one of the clerics explained in a loud voice "were of that most pestilent son of the devil, the beloved of the whole host of hell, Martin Luther, etc." A small crowd was gazing in sullen silence. The scene was not to my liking, but I had no intention of making a useless martyr of myself by interfering then, and I was watching cynically from a safe distance when I beheld a lady abbess, all in white wool and ermine, with a sweep and clatter ride up upon her tall bay palfrey, two nuns on less elegant steeds followed, with two lay serving-maids, and a few male servitors. They drew rein, and their mistress sat, evidently watching the sight with great content, as the hang-

man added pamphlet after pamphlet and the priest bawled out the titles. Suddenly the game, however, was rudely interrupted. Out of a side street came rushing a young man in peasant dress, a goodly cudgel waving above his head.

"O Holy God! O Holy God!" he fell to shouting. "See how these scoundrels crucify Thy word afresh! They are worse than the Jews, for they take Thy name in vain! At them, Christians—avenge the pious books the black crows try to burn!"

And thereat with all the valor of fanaticism and youth, he leaped straight up on the pillory, and I saw his staff dash down on the shaven crown of a protesting priest with a thwack that sent the cleric spinning. In a twinkling the gaping crowd of lazy apprentices, hucksters, and guild journeymen was changed into a bawling, infuriate mob, casting itself upon clerks and hangman, stamping out the fire, calling for "ropes for the crows' necks," and howling all manner of curses. So much can one spark explode, if only the train is ready! A handful of halberdiers came running from the neighboring Rathaus to avenge outraged authority, but in the *melée* their weapons were mostly wrested from them, while forth from every tall timber house near the square swarmed men with pikes and boys with cudgels, to swell the mob.

I was beholding all, with inward blessings for the rioters, when my eye lit upon the lady abbess. In the tumult her horse had become restive. She was separated from her followers, and sorely tested to retain the control of her palfrey, when I saw a rascally looking apprentice pounce at her bridle.

"A prize, comrades! Not a black crow, but a white one—ei!"

His dirty fingers closed over her ermine cloak. The brooch held it. He was actually tearing it from her shoulders, despite her struggles and screams, when I felled him with

a sweeping blow from the flat of my sword. He rose with execrations, called to his mates, and some of them might rashly have assailed even a ritter with his weapon ready, when the sight of Adolf and two other burly Regensteiners at my back made them one and all slink away.

"With your pardon, Reverend Abbess," I said, "I will extricate you from this outrageous tumult." And then I shouted, during a lull, to the rioters, "Hearken, good folk, broken heads and foul oaths do not make honest Christians! Your furious zeal does Dr. Luther little honor! I am sure these worthy priests are sorry they ever lit the bonfire. Now let them go, and do all things peaceably."

The less heated contestants dropped their arms instantly, the more angry glowered a moment, then were fain to imitate. The priests and halberdiers improved the chance to flee to the Rathaus and bar the door. The original champion of Luther drew the charred papers out of the fire and held them up reverently before all the people. Then he began to chant Hutten's bitter poem on the commandment to burn Luther's books.

"Here, Lord, Thy holy words they burn;
Thy teachings pure they from them spurn;
Here are Thy precepts thrust aside,
And license given to vice and pride."

At the end of every couplet the folk answered with a yell. A procession began to organize to course the town, and I knew there would be more rioting and an anxious hour for His Grace the prince-bishop ere the day was over. My business was to conduct the abbess to a place of safety.

"Reverend lady," I began again, "this is likely to be a blustering day on the streets, but my inn is near and I have stout fellows to guard us. Suffer me therefore —"

I drew off my cap in salutation, and simultaneously she

thrust back her displaced coif. For the first time our eyes met fairly. I was addressing Abbess Theckla of Quedlinburg. . . .

The blood went up to her pale cheeks; I am sure I flushed also. Fortunately the existing tumult was sufficient excuse for scanty conversation.

"Here is no pleasant spot for exchanging civilities," I remarked, as coolly as I might; "at the inn we can discourse more comfortably."

She twitched an instant at her bridle, but the mob began to howl again, whilst their self-appointed leader read forth from the charred sheets one of Luther's especially vehement denunciations of Popery. Pride capitulated before obvious prudence.

"Wolves!" she muttered through her white teeth. She suffered me to lead her palfrey. My men walked beside the horses of her retinue. Adolf's flail-like sword clattered on the cobbles in a way that warned against molesting us. We were soon at the *Goldene Krone*, where mine host relieved, came running to greet me, "fearful lest his Lordship had been murdered in the brawling." We were soon behind good bolts and bars, and though we heard shouting later, and a couple of arquebuse shots, the inn servants brought in tidings that the tumult was quieting before a vigorous demonstration by the bishop's guards, and that nobody had really perished. As for the strange leader of the riot, he had vanished down a side street, and none could catch him.

"One of the innumerable hawkers of Luther's pamphlets, no doubt," quoth the host, with a shake of his head, "oh! such times. The whole town by the ears over a few sheets of paper. Men get so excited crying 'Luther' and 'Leo' over their cups, they forget the need of a second flagon. Ruin to all good business!"

By the time the outbreak had quieted it was far too late

for the abbess to continue to Hanover for the night, — she being on journey homeward, her maids explained, from Osnabrück, where there had been a meeting of her order. The host placed at her disposal the rooms which I had taken, and I confess to a little sinful delight at putting Her Reverence under an increased obligation. Ever coldly precise, the abbess ere retiring deigned to say a few words of formal thanks for my double service.

“But, gracious and holy Lady,” said I, with my best bow, “I have vast pleasure in befriending the near kinswoman of my dear comrade Graf Moritz von Blankenburg.”

The abbess’s pink and white face colored again. In a tone as monotonous as a slow chill river she answered me.

“I am indeed grateful. I would ill requite your present courtesy, my Lord Graf von Regenstein, by speaking of other days, and indeed since now that lady you once called Ilsa von Blankenburg is become a blessed bride of Christ, I can think of no reason why I should not accept your gallantry with all thanks; and yet —”

She hesitated, eying me deliberately, as if asking me to draw her disapproval, and I complied not unwillingly.

“I am awaiting your Reverence’s opinion.”

“The Graf von Regenstein will not grow angry if I say I would have my nephew and himself less intimate friends. I have heard the reports of your life at Rome and Palaestro. I know of your connection with that Cardinal of Forli, one of the few, the *very* few churchmen whom His Holiness in excess of benignity allows to disgrace his sacred calling. I am not unaware how you sought to frustrate my pious wish, and turn my niece away from the convent to your own most sinful life. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it was your own action, Sir Graf, which at last overcame her hesitation and drove her into our blessed retreat, again I can do nothing else than thank you.”

Had she been a man, I would have felled her to the floor with my knotted fist; as it was, I simply bit my tongue for an instant, then asked in a voice that possibly shook a little, "Whether the Lady Ilsa was now exceeding happy in her new life?"

"She is happy with that happiness which the world cannot give. Our Holy Mother the Church has received her into her bosom. She is possessed by a peace and joy which I fear you, Sir Graf, can never know."

I was tempted to question the abbess touching her opinion of Luther. It would have provoked a lively volley. But *cui bono?* He who argues with a woman has surely one arm tied. I only bowed again, very low, and wished her Ladyship a restful night. It was still too early to think of retiring myself, and I amused myself in the great room of the inn with a bottle of tolerable Hochheimer, and reading "The Soul's Vegetable Garden," by Dietrich Koelds, a little book of pious meditat on, much in acceptance in North Germany, — not very brisk company, but all I could find, and better than my own unruly thoughts. I was just yawning for the seventh time, when I saw a woman standing before me, a young peasant woman, with a comely blond face. I recognized her as one of the lay servitors of the abbess.

"Sir," she asked, "are you the Graf von Regenstein?" I nodded.

"Then, sir," with a quick look about (the room was now nearly empty), "will you graciously listen to me, if I tell you somewhat of Sister Ilsa?"

I fear I almost dropped the book, my lips surely twitched when I bade her, "Say on."

"Oh! Sir Graf, she is most miserable and unhappy."

"Why do you come to tell me that?"

"You do not understand. I am Trude, the daughter of that Gunter of the Brook, whose life your Lordship spared.

He went to me on your behalf, but ere his return to the Regenstein your Lordship had departed. Now I will tell you."

"Do you know this 'Sister' Ilsa?" I asked, eying her keenly.

"Well indeed. She has little to do with most of the nuns and serving women, but one day I ran a knife into my hand while in the kitchen. It was most terrible. She bandaged and nursed me. The rest neglected 'the outlaw's daughter.' She did not. Oh! her heart is tender and good as Our Blessed Lady's. Once I asked her why she, the abbess's niece and perhaps abbess herself some day, was so kindly to me, a poor wench, whose father was disgraced. 'Ah! Trude,' said she, with a laugh I did not like, 'I shall never be abbess of Quedlinburg. I am not a saint like Aunt Theckla. Sometimes I think I have no vocation. That being so, I try to be as kind as I can to everybody, just to stop thinking.' Your Lordship attends and is interested?"

"I am interested. Go on. Tell only the truth, however, or your father, and you, too, are forever undone."

"That was some time since. We have grown even closer friends now, more than perhaps is fitting, seeing I am peasant and she a great lady; but she would have it so. The nuns complain she has little to do with most of them. She takes no interest in distilling medicines or in their endless needle work. She almost never complains herself, but oh! my Lord Graf, she is most unhappy. Once she made to me a kind of confession."

"What was it?"

"Once she said, 'Trude, no one should ever enter the convent unless she is very sure of her vocation. I know a nun here in Quedlinburg, who took the vows to ransom her father's soul, he being dead, and her lover's, he being still alive, but very sinful. Now she knows it is no prayer nor

deed of hers that can ever avail for either, but only the loving mercy of God. She has no vocation for the convent; but the vows are taken. Pray God, Trude, there be not many other women in her state.'"

"This is indeed sad, my lass," I said, I hope with well affected indifference, "but whence came this strange notion of hers that it is 'the mercy of God' which alone will save a soul? Surely the nuns are not taught that?"

"I am not sure, Sir," she answered, "but I think Sister Ilsa has bought some of Dr. Luther's books when she has gone down to the market in Quedlinburg. Once I saw her with a printed pamphlet. She hid it in her dress very quickly when an old nun passed by, and whispered 'She must not see that, Trude, or Aunt Theckla will rage terribly.'"

"The nuns have been forbidden to read Dr. Luther's books, then?" I inquired.

"Of course, by the abbess; but all the younger nuns are reading them. They hardly dare to confess it one to another, much less to the chaplain. They say Luther writes wonderfully well, although the abbess says 'his inspiration is of the devil.' But I am only a poor, unlettered girl, and cannot judge."

Here the clock thundered out a late hour, and I told Trude to depart, first putting three silver gulden in her hand, and promising her as many more if I could see her again very early in the morning, before her mistress set forth for Hanover. As for myself, I tossed on my feather beds all night.

"She has no vocation for the convent, but the vows are taken." The trumpeters of hell seemed dinning the words through my head unceasingly.

CHAPTER XXIV

I PLAY WITH FIRE

MANY are the fair cities of Germany, but few I think nobler situate than ancient Quedlinburg, on the eastern verge of the Harzland. They say old King Henry the Fowler founded the town, and his son, the first Otto, transported hither the nuns of Wenthussen, giving them the queenly abbey which dominates the burghers' houses and the markplatz from its steep, nigh unapproachable, hill. All around below this convent-citadel spreads the rolling farm country, and to south and west open the noble summits of the Harz, at this time sparkling again under their mantle of snow. The twin towers of the abbey church rose from the crest like two slim fingers pointing towards the blue, silent monitors of the way to heaven.

It was a perfect winter's day. Cold but very still. The smoke from the chimneys mounted upward in straight columns until it faded away, a gray mist in the sun-shot heavens. In the market-place, before the ancient brick Rathaus, donkeys wheezed as they brought in their loads, geese and hens cackled, pigs squealed, housewives and market women upraised shrill voices as they debated the price of eggs or of frozen herring. Every one was too busy to pay attention to a beggar who came stealing out of the horse stalls by the *Weisser Engel*, especially as this same beggar avoided any attention. The beggar was myself.

"Playing with fire?" — I surely knew it. I had told myself it was treason to the Cause a hundred times. But, good God, what stuff was I made of? When, on my return to

the Regenstein, I had met a letter telling me to postpone for two weeks my projected mission to the Palatinate, could I sit cooling my heels in lonesome grandeur in my chilly hall of state, with no brisker company than Adolf? Risks I ran, and I candidly confessed them. Discovery would doubtless ruin utterly my influence for the Cause, and yet I felt that Dr. Luther, if consulted, would have bidden me "go in God's name," and have only prayed the harder if I seemed thrusting into peril.

As I moved cautiously from the inn, the spirit of adventure rose within me. My disguise was admirable, and I conceived that some slight experience as Harlequin and Pantalone in divers polite comedies and maskings at Rome enabled me to carry the part. I was arrayed as a wandering pilgrim, begging his way from shrine to shrine, and what with very tattered brown mantle and hose, a capacious bag for alms, a heavy staff and a villainous trim on my beard, I think I fairly looked the part. As I went up the street I even paused at an open door where a rosy-cheeked young matron was scrubbing the lintel, and held out my bag, just to gain practise and courage.

"*Panem propter Deum* — bread for God's sake, gracious mistress," I whined through my nose, and she looked up at me quickly.

"You are a genuine pilgrim, poor man," quoth she; "surely your cloak is ragged enough."

"Genuine, by the Holy Rood, generous lady. Ah! if I could relate to you all my sad travels. In my boyhood I cursed my mother, and she died suddenly ere granting forgiveness. Therefore I took the pilgrim's vows to save my soul. Fulda, St. Martin's shrine in Tours in France, St. James of Compostella, St. Thomas of Canterbury; I have visited them all. Now I would fain visit holy Einsiedeln in Switzerland, but the way is long —"

"Ah! my poor friend," said she, manifestly stirred by my twanging pathos, "I am sure your mother has long since forgiven you up in heaven. You must have been indeed a good son, though a bit hasty of tongue, to proffer such expiation. Well, if to Einsiedeln you must go, you must not go starving. Wait a moment."

She was gone into the house, and soon came back with two small loaves of bread and a goodly slice of ham, which she placed in my wallet. "Now hasten on, I beg of you," she enjoined, "my Heinrich has been reading those books of Dr. Luther, and says now that giving to pilgrims is giving to rogues. If he knows, he will be in a temper."

"Our Lady bless and assoil you," I whined as I shuffled away, made confident by my success, yet boiling inwardly at the shallowness of an imposture which must have made religion the finest dress for beggary through all wide Germany.

And now I began to go up the slow, steep way to the castle convent. Trude and Adolf had arranged everything, had taught me the custom of the nuns in distributing their alms, and had brought it to pass, by a discreet distribution of groschen to earlier comers, that I should be the only applicant upon that day. At the gate house, before I entered the fortification, the sleepy old porter looked out of his lodge, as I trudged past.

"Go up! go up, you cheese-hunter.¹ Your bag is well filled, I warrant, and you've breakfasted better than I; but you'll meet one of the sisters at the inner grille, and she'll give you more."

So he called cynically, and I continued on my way. The cobble paved ascent ended presently. Before me rose the bleak stone wall of the inner convent, where I was unprivileged to enter; but I had been informed what I must do. Turning to the left I saw a small doorway. The inner door

¹ A name often given greedy begging monks and pilgrims.

was open, but across it was a firm iron lattice duly locked within, and above the lattice hung a little image of St. Christopher bearing Our Lord, also a small bell. I seized the dangling cord and rang. Immediately a very old nun, all bent and furrowed under her black robes and veil, responded.

"Well, fellow," she demanded, not too amiably.

"*Panem propter Deum*," I whined at my best. "I am a poor pilgrim, very hungry, and nigh spent."

"Bah!" she answered tartly from behind the bars, "you look as fat as any of them; but it's none of my business to sift your silly stories. Wait a bit. This is Sister Ilsa's task. She can listen all day, and give you the convent bread if she will."

She slipped on a pair of wooden shoes, and I heard her go clattering away down a long dark corridor. "Sister Ilsa:—" I wonder if, of all the multitude of mendicants who sought alms while the nuns were in Quedlinburg, one had ever emotions and thoughts like mine!

It seemed a century that I waited. Probably it was only a few moments. I was growing very cold, but not with the winter wind. Then a warm rush of blood tingled from crown to heels—another nun was approaching the grille. I could have told that step from a thousand. Overcome for the instant, I felt my strength failing me. I caught an iron bar of the lattice, and leaned there stupidly, dumbly.

Then a voice, ah! what a voice. "Alas! poor man, so overcome by hunger and fatigue you cannot stand upright, be of good cheer. See, here is good bread and beef brawn. And if you are very cold, though I cannot let you in, I will fetch some *aqua vitae* from the buttery."

"Come, Graf von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein," I exhorted myself, as though for a sore ordeal; "play your part as a man!"

By an action of real will, I straightened, looked her fairly

in the eye, and with unblushing countenance repeated my story. She thrust the food through the grille, and I began eating it with feigned heartiness, although I rejected her offer of liquors. The act of devouring gave me excuse for eying her without speaking. She was exceedingly pallid; the white coif and the black veil over it added to the effect of marble. There were lines around her lips and below her eyes which I disliked greatly; but to me no luxurious Venetian goddess of Palma Vecchio could have seemed more fair. Her hand touched mine as she reached a piece of meat, and a kind of electric fire sprang through me. I watched shrewdly, to be sure that we were quite alone. The old nun had clearly been glad of a substitute, and the chill day had quenched the usual convent curiosity. All had doubtless sought a genial hearth fire. After my eating had slacked a little, my benefactress began to ply me with questions as to my past pilgrimages and future wandering, and I answered as before, inventing shamelessly. At last she said:—

“I should think God, if He is really so good as we are taught, could forgive you after a little more. Surely you have long since paid out the price for your evil words to your mother.”

“So I trust, holy Lady,” said I, “but I have not told you yet, I think, that I have vowed to spend all my life as a pilgrim; and can vows, even lightly taken, ever be broken?”

I have called her pale, but now she turned ashen. She in turn clutched at the grille. Her lips were opened, but without speech. With the iron lattice between us, but our faces quite close, I spoke softly.

“Do you not know me, Ilsa?”

She sprang back as if smitten by an arrow; from her mouth came a muffled scream; under her black veil her great eyes shone out terribly. I thought her about to flee, but her strength seemed to fail her. She fell on her knees by the

lattice, pressing her head against the bars. I knelt and kissed one of her hands as it closed around the iron.

"Walter!" she said; "Walter!" And for some time she seemed able only to repeat my name.

"I knew you were in sorrow, Ilsa," I said now calmly; rising, and letting her sobbing and panic spend itself, "therefore I have come. And believe me, it is not the Devil, but God who has brought me here."

She sat upright now, and showed no signs of flight; but twisted and untwisted her hands in a manner piteous. At last she began talking brokenly.

"Oh! what are we to do? Christ help us! What are we to do?" Presently her form straightened. "You have done wrong, Walter, utterly wrong to come here. Do you not see what you have done? After I realized how terrible had been my mistake, how not by praying *for* you in the distant cloister, but *beside* you as your loving wife, I might have made you a nobler man, what could I do save to try to crush all memory, all initiative, all ambition? To become as dry and unhuman and cold as these nuns here? And I believed I was gaining the mastery over myself, a little. And now you are here, and all the fires are burning hotter, a thousand-fold hotter than ever. Blessed God, but it is hard!"

"Ilsa," I answered her, "hard it has been for you, but bethink you, somewhat hard it has been for me. After you spurned me, only the grace of God and the monitions of Dr. Luther saved me from turning back to my old life, seven times more wicked than before. And think not your prayers were wholly vain. Let no man boast his soul is reckoned safe; but if man may strive, I have striven to redeem mine. I am not what I was once. I am all German now." And in as few words as possible I told her of my efforts for my Regenstein folk and in behalf of Dr. Luther. Seeing the thing seemed to interest her I told her of the present state of the

Cause, and how all Germany seemed straining on her moorings to Rome, and how Papal power, and all things with it, were like to be swept into the cupboard of the discarded past.

She put her hands to her eyes as I spoke. There came the relief of tears. Presently she was calmer than I.

"Are we in danger of discovery?" I asked.

"I think not. The nuns do not like me overwell. Meeting the beggars is my one permitted diversion. They are quite content to leave me to chatter in the cold with mendicants. We can converse a little longer." Then she took my right hand firmly in hers. "Now let us reason together bravely and soberly, for we are not a silly wench and a silly hind to pawn our souls for a moment of evil passion, nor am I the first nun to beat out her life like a caught sparrow on the bars of its cage, caught as I was by a hope that was vain, and a life that cannot satisfy."

"Brave and sober we must be," I asserted, "and what we do we shall do clear-eyed, and in sight of God and His angels. But tell me once again, for my ears long for it, do you truly love me?"

"Till eternity cease to be, I love you." And there beneath that cold winter sky, she put her face to the bars of the grille, and I kissed her, the black veil touching my cheek as I did so. Playing with fire indeed!

"Ei!" she cried with a flash of her old-time vivacity, "I have given my lips to a pretty beggar."

"Now," I said, very slowly, "come weal, come woe, come separation, come union; few things can truly matter. God is above us. Life is short, eternity long, and convents are not, nor vows in the vast Hereafter."

She let go my hand. We stood facing one another. A merciful Providence still left us uninterrupted, and by great good fortune there were no windows overlooking the grille. Then I told her how night by night I saw her in my dreams,

and ever as my wife. And as I spoke I saw that she was marvelling.

"But Walter," spoke she, "now these many nights I have dreamed ever the same; it has been always in the Regenstein, the dear Regenstein, which I can see on clear days from the convent windows, and you were always with me, and folk called me 'wife' and 'mother.' How, how can these things be? God spoke once in dreams, to Samuel, to Peter, to Paul, and are they but fleeting phantoms now?"

"I cannot tell," I answered. "I could speak from the lore of the pagan Greeks and Latins, but to what profit? Yet know this. I am Graf von Regenstein, and my men will follow me. Say but the word, and I will have you out of Quedlinburg convent by mild means or violent, and hold you safe in the castle against all the thunders of the Church."

She shook her head. "You are jesting, Walter, I know it. I must come to you only as your honored bride. There is no hope thus. We could not live at peace in all Christendom. Perchance we might flee to the uttermost isles — those isles of the vast blue deep they say the Spaniards found — where golden fruits hang on the trees, and summer never ends. There we might indeed be beyond the reproach of men, but, tell me, would we be beyond the reproach of God?"

I reached through the grille and regained her hand.

"No, Ilsa," I rejoined, "I would not have you, save to do you honor; and you may trust me. But trusting me, believe me in this: the thing we call the Church and all its power and teachings seem verily to be on the eve of a mighty change. What yesterday was accounted truth, passes for doubtful to-day; it will be rank error to-morrow. I have heard you read Dr. Luther's books."

"Yes, yes."

"You have doubtless read how monastic vows are a denial of baptism, being an insult to God, as if, after He had re-

ceived us into His Church to redeem us if we are worthy, we now try to bribe Him by an excess of good works?"

"I have; but it is all strange. When fearful vows have been taken, by whom can they be remitted?"

"By God, speaking to us in our hearts."

"How can I know it is He that speaks, and not the Fiend?"

"I am but an ill theologian, Ilsa," I said, laughing drearily. "I would you could speak with Dr. Luther. He is the most wonderful man in the world. The flash of his eye, the grip of his hand resolve all doubts. Well,—what shall I say further, for we cannot stand at this grille forever. Shall I bid Gunter give Trude more of Dr. Luther's books to pass to you? Is it quite safe?"

"The nuns are reading them," she answered demurely, and then for the first time her old roguish twinkle lit her eye. "I will tell you. I have committed a fearful sin. Perhaps it will never be forgiven. Yet it does not make me miserable. Old Father Anton, the convent chaplain, mayhaps prompted by my aunt, asked me in confession 'Have you read any books of Luther the Heretic?' and I answered very boldly, 'No.' And so, I learn, answered many other of the younger nuns. Do you think we are making the angels very sad?"

"Ah! Ilsa, Ilsa," answered I, "the angels will gladly forgive you, and you are making one sinner very glad; for 'tis the first steps in such sweet heresies which lead to greater. Hear, then, what I, who love you more than life, declare. Standing upon this rock, with the blue sky of God above me, I say I will abide true to you till you come to me on this earth as my honored bride, or our souls greet up in heaven. I will not beset your path, I will put on you no shameful entreaty nor violence, but as Jacob served seven years for his bride, and they seemed to him but a few days, so will I serve the Cause for you. For the Cause of Luther, which is

God's, shall triumph, and that triumph shall make you free, and we shall ride into the Regenstein together, wife and husband."

As I spoke, the sound of the organ, and of women chanting, pealed from the interior of the convent. We heard the noon-time hymn to the Virgin Mother.

"Ave Maria, angelorum dea:
Coeli rectrix, Virgo Maria!
Ave maris stella, lucens miseris
Deitatis cella, porta principis!"

"This is the service before the refecton," said Ilsa." I must go at once, or I shall be missed."

I knelt on the muddy flags by the grille and she laid her hand on my head.

"And I, Ilsa von Blankenburg," she spoke a trifle shrilly, token of her inner strain, "do promise that I will ever bear you on my heart, will ever pray for you and for the Cause you say may set us free. Yes, I will even dare to hope also. And do you, Walter, go forth to your knightly battle, for Luther, and righteousness, and God; a warfare nobler than those Crusades against the distant infidel, on which once rode your ancestors and mine. And if the day ever comes when I may join you as your honored bride, I am ready. And if not — then is left to us the fair Hereafter."

I rose. We kissed again, then joined hands and spoke in concert, "The Lord watch between thee and me while we are absent, one from the other."

"Sister Ilsa! Sister Ilsa!" called a cracked voice from within; "dismiss that greasy beggar and his tales. Has he bewitched you? The service is half chanted."

"I come immediately," she answered.

Without more ado, she gathered her black robe around her and was gone down the dark passage. I was left standing in the bleak roadway.

"Ei! my fine pilgrim," cried the gate-keeper as I went down, "you were well fed and gossiped by that Sister Ilsa, I warrant." . . .

Late that night I had regained the Regenstein. After warming myself at the roaring hearth fire I dismissed my servants, and clambered alone up dizzy stairs and blind ladders to the topmost parapet of the black donjon. Below me lay the vast pile of the sleeping castle, and around spread the snow peaks, their frosted contours sparkling back the innumerable stars. Not a sound of beast nor man, nor even of the wind broke the awesome stillness. For many moments I stood in profound thought, then I prayed, not kneeling, but aloud and lifting up my hands to the great dark dome on high.

"Oh! God," I prayed, "Thou God who by the stirring of my soul and the word of Martin Luther hast plucked me out of the Italian paganism and mire, who has made a man of me, set to do a man's part, accept this proffer of my uttermost powers even to do Thy will, not mine. Nevertheless if it be possible, if it be that the Cause shall triumph and men's souls be redeemed from error and fear, grant that Thy mercy descend on Ilsa von Blankenburg, for her need is great. If pain must be, let it be mine to bear it, not hers. Yet if it be Thy will, let the bondage which withstands our happiness vanish away."

Then presently I prayed again.

"O Lord, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief!"

Gone was the lore of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Lucretius, and all their peers; gone that accursed confidence in my own wit, wisdom, and abilities; gone everything save a knowledge that I was an insufficient, fallible, sinful man whose only hope was in the help of Heaven. I went down from the tower, and sought my bed. The memorable day ended with a peaceful, refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER XXV

THE ROAD TO WORMS

So back again to the labor for the Cause. Events were marching. At Worms, the old Rhenish city, the Diet had met, and young Emperor Charles and his princes were deliberating upon all the complex affairs of the Holy Roman Empire. To Worms came two Papal nuncios in their red and purple, Monsignori Caracciolo and Aleander, with many demands from their Medici master, but chiefly requiring one great "Christian act," the surrender to condign punishment of the new "monster," "Arius," "Mahomet," whose other appellation was Martin Luther.

Already Charles with his Flemish and Spanish advisers had shown their hands. In the Low Countries where he ruled in person, bonfires of the heretical books were blazing. But when Aleander came with his request, objection met him. Before election Charles had made solemn promise that no German should be laid under the "ban" without a fair hearing, and who had tried Luther? The bland legate replied that "to the Pope belonged the condemnation of heretics, and if *his* paternal mercy were satisfied, Holy Saints! would Cæsar and his princes appear more hard to please than the Pope?"

The Emperor, however, was scarce convinced. He had, besides, other questions to ask the reverend legates. Would the Pope confirm him in the entire control of that most convenient engine of political tyranny, the Inquisition in Spain? Would the Pope waive his claims to Ferrara? Would he aid

Charles in the threatened war with France? Till these were answered the Emperor had no final decision as to Luther, and besides, with one voice was not Germany, — peasants, burghers, and ritters, — making itself heard; from the white Alps to the blue Baltic, the great cry sounding, — “Let not Luther perish without fair trial!” And Charles was no such fool as to be deaf to that cry.

As for me, each time I returned to Wittenberg after riding post, I would be mightily refreshed by the calm and cheer I found in the little city. The much discussed friar was still moving about his university routine. I can picture him touching his lute in the evenings, or walking by morn in the wintry weather beside the ice-girt Elbe. Friends and students went ever in and out the modest convent. News good and bad was always discussed with the uttermost freedom.

“I am very happy to-day,” he said once to a group of us, frowning over some heavy news; “surely God is bringing us very near to victory, or the Fiend would not find it needful to rage so horribly.”

Then in the long winter evenings I can see again his great quill flying over the paper at a new polemic, and the next morning the Wittenberg printers would be clanging their presses with redoubled fury.

“Will Charles summon Luther to Worms?” Germany was asking. And the millions who at first said “He must,” presently began more confidently to say “He will.” But after that came another question, “Will Luther go to Worms?” And there was hesitation even among those who loved the Cause right well. For at Worms would be all the puissance and majesty of Church and State, every hostile influence that could be invoked to crush the heretic, every glitter and threat of power invoked to overawe the peasant’s son who had ventured to gainsay the dictates of the mighty. “If Luther goes to Worms,” so not one, but many men told

me, "he will either be sent to the stake, or dazzled into a recantation. Better stay away, and let the ban of the Empire issue."

I knew that sober men were talking of carnal war. Franz von Sickingen, greatest of the Rhine ritters, and Hutten's friend, who saw in Luther's cause a noble pretext for warfare on the prince-bishops his soul hated, had long since written him, "My services, my lands, my person are at your summons." And Hutten had written, urging recourse to "swords, bows, javelins, and bombs." "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," so ran a favorite text in many mouths, but not in Luther's. I saw what he wrote to Spalatin, wise Frederick's confessor, touching such mad counsellings. "I do not wish that we fight for the Gospel with fire and sword. By the Word the world has been subdued, by the Word the Church has been upheld, and by the Word it will be reformed." And again touching the question of going to Worms, "I will be carried to Worms if I cannot go well. If they intend violence, and no doubt they do, my case is commended to the Lord. The same Lord lives and reigns who preserved the three youths in the furnace of the King of Babylon, and if He does not choose to preserve me, my head is a small thing in comparison with the slaying of Christ. Amen."

And now at last tidings came, ever more frequently, both from friends and foes in the Rhinelands, as to the fury of the legates when their hot demands met with no instant compliance, and the bitter counter-complaints of the assembled princes at the persistence of many confessed abuses in the Church, and of the endless negotiation and recrimination. Finally came the issue to it all; an imperial summons bidding Luther "come to Worms under safe conduct, to give an account to the Emperor and the Diet of his books and his doctrines."

I was in Wittenberg when the imperial herald, Caspar Sturm, whose official style was "Deutschland," a noble-minded and lordly man, arrived with the formal mandate. With many of Luther's friends I stood in the little study whilst he unrolled the formidable parchment. At last Melanchthon spoke hesitantly.

"Dear Doctor, what will you do?"

"Do, Philip?" was the deep-voiced answer, "I will go!"

And then a silence fell on all of us. To the Wittenbergers it seemed a time for sadness, even as to the disciples of Paul when they were "sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they should see his face no more."

The time was short for the needful preparation. Luther must present himself at Worms by the 16th of April. He could not set forth before the second. I did my part in making everything ready. The good burghers of the city of Wittenberg were glad to provide a covered wagon and stout horses. After a painful consultation Luther picked the three who should go with him, — Amsdorf, a young nobleman studying at Wittenberg, Peter Swaven, and also a humble but very loyal friar, John Petzensteiner. That I was to accompany need not be told, — at least they had no means of preventing me. Tearfully and reluctantly Melanchthon consented to stay. "For who can fill your place, my Philip?" spoke his master, "and if you live when I die, the cause of Christ will have lost but little."

All Wittenberg was in the streets, when on the morning of April 2, 1521, the man who had spread the name of the city from Muscovy to England was about to set forth. The professors of the university, the town notabilities, and certain friendly students, awaited in the convent garden as he came down from the upper chamber. His step was elastic, his eye calm and clear. Melanchthon went beside him and wrung his hand silently, every one drew back a little, and

there was a hush as if expecting he would say something, nor were they disappointed.

"They have torn in pieces my honor and my good name. I have lost all hopes of worldly greatness. Only my poor body is left. But as for my soul, they shall not have that. He who is resolved to bear the word of Christ to the world must expect death every hour. Therefore I am well prepared."

He took the brown cap from his head, and bowed right and left to the company.

"Christ keep us all, good Christian neighbors and brothers of Wittenberg, and bring us safe to heaven. And now—farewell."

He entered the wagon. The others were already there before him. I mounted my palfrey, with a few retainers to bring up the rear. Before all rode Deutschland, his bright livery flashing, in his hand the streaming red, black, and gold banner, blazoned with the double eagle of the imperial Hapsburgs. The folk were in no mood for cheering. Silence held us staying or going, while we passed down the long Collegien-strasse, and even went by the gate where lay the mouldering ashes of the Papal Bull; then a bent old woman sprang from the crowd with a great wail.

"They are taking away the dear Dr. Martin! Dr. Martin, who taught my lads to live honest, who saved my maids from shame! They will burn him! They will burn him! We shall never see him more!"

Some one plucked her back roughly, all was too tense for gentle measures.

"God bless you, good Dame," spoke Luther clearly, as he rolled past her. And for the first time I saw that his cheeks were wet with tears.

* * * * *

As we fared on that journey it was a marvel how the

people of every class and clan ran out to us. They came to meet Dr. Martin outside the gates of their cities "to gaze upon the wonderful man," said the friendly chronicler, "who was so bold as to set himself against the Pope and all who in opposition to Christ look upon the Pope as a god." At Leipzig, despite the memories of Eck's disputation, the magistrates received us right honorably. At Naumburg, on the third, we had another great concourse. A lusty band of young men, wandering students, apprentices, young petty nobles all came out to us, singing one of Hutten's latest battle songs: —

Take up your own, your righteous cause
O nation brave and strong,
Will ye not listen to my words,
And help avenge this wrong?
The die is cast
And I stand fast,
Whatever be my fate:
The cards I'll play
As best I may,
And then the end await.

Although the cunning priests I know
Their snares for me have laid,
The man who knows his cause is good
Needs not to be dismayed.
I'll play the game,
And all the same
E'en though they seek my life:
Brave nobles all,
On you I call,
Join Hutten in the strife!"

Swinging verses these, well fitted to make the blood spring faster, but brave songs are not the whole of the battle. At this same Naumburg I was present when a certain priest

came to Dr. Luther at the inn, bearing a picture of Savonarola, the prophet-martyr of Florence, but my master looked at it unmoved. "It is Satan," spoke he, "who seeks by these terrors to hinder the confession of the truth in the assembly of the princes."

"Not so," answered the friendly priest; "stand fast in the truth thou hast confessed, and thy God will not forsake thee."

At Erfurt, where Luther had been so long a humble student and friar, he was met on the confines of the city territory by forty horsemen led by the great Magister Crotus himself, and men laughed at their fears and listened.

As we approached Eisenach, to our great dismay a fit of sickness overtook the dear Doctor one evening. An anxious and prayerful night it was for his friends, but a skilful bleeding, a cordial, and a sound sleep made our master hale again. Thankfully we pressed forward.

But every day the danger seemed growing. Luther had the Imperial safe-conduct suffering him to return to Wittenberg unharmed. Excellent. But such a safe-conduct had the Bohemian heretic John Hus possessed, and the Council of Constance had burned him for all that. And Worms, every report bore, was swarming with Papalists, — politically minded courtiers ready to barter Luther's life for Medici aid in Italy, fanatically minded Spaniards who detested all things German, and all the countless agents of Rome from legate down to valet, who were howling like wolves for blood. And last but not least was the cold, hard young Emperor, who saw in Luther mere insurrection against a time-honored authority it was his duty to defend.

All these were against us. Often on the way I meditated "what ought I to urge Dr. Luther to do? Will not the safe-conduct be violated?" Then wild visions would come of a flight with my master to the Regenstein, of calling all the

Harzland ritters to my side, and of a red raging war whereof only God could tell the end. Then I would look upon that peaceful, smiling man, sitting on the straw, and bartering innocent Latin saws with Amsdorf, and my wild visions would fade.

At Weimar came tidings of an imperial edict ordering the burning of Luther's books throughout Germany. The herald brought us the news while we were dining at an inn, and well I remember his searching interrogation.

"Now, Herr Doctor, will you proceed?"

"Yes," answered Luther quietly, and in good color.

"The man rides to his death," whispered young Swaven.

"Beyond a doubt the Emperor is prejudged against him."

"I feel it," I rejoined, "but what are we to do?"

He shrugged his shoulders. The horses were reharnessed. Luther was the first to clamber into the wagon. For a while I rode gloomily in the rear. Presently I heard Dr. Martin's voice upraised, and I caught up with the wagon to get his words. He was repeating with much merriment the story of godless Peter Luders, a notable scholar of the past generation who lost his character in Italy, and once when very drunk had uttered heretical opinions. So at Basel they accused him of denying the three members of the Trinity, to which he had unblushingly answered, "Gladly will I confess *four* if you will but leave me alone."

What could one say of such a man as our master? Whether God or fiend were guiding him, the matter was out of our hands. I put my horse at his speed, to race ahead to the next town and arrange for comfortable quarters and livery.

CHAPTER XXVI

WE ENTER WORMS

ON the fifteenth of April, 1521, we reached Oppenheim, having crossed the Rhine, and being now only one stage from Worms. Time was pressing. On the sixteenth the safe-conduct expired and any failure to reach the Diet would leave Luther far from his sheltering Saxony, and in the very claws of the adversary. The shouting, the cheering, the perpetual "vivats" from the multitudes had been well, but I knew how much the fair words and sympathies of women, peasants, and students were worth against a file of imperial lanz-knechts despatched to seize their hero. Destruction seemed alike before and behind us now, but Dr. Martin had chosen the way, and I was past urging "turn back." Yet many a good friend was not so convinced as was I that God was leading us, and at Oppenheim came a warning that would have made a very Hannibal quail.

We were in the road winding up the steep crags toward the little city when a messenger in the Elector of Saxony's livery rode up to us, and with him a Dominican friar, one Martin Bucer, a trusty friend and preacher of the Cause. I will not repeat all that they said; enough that they brought a letter from Spalatin, the Elector's own confessor, warning against going any farther. All kinds of perils lurked at Worms. Aleander, the Papal Legate, was raging that "Luther had enough heresy in him to warrant burning a hundred thousand," and that his following was the offscouring of Germany. As for the safe-conduct, let Luther remember Hus's fate, and

let him heed also the rumor ¹ that the very influential Cardinal of Tortosa, the Emperor's tutor, had written to his one-time pupil, urging earnestly "to hand the fellow over to the Pope for his deserts."

"What, then, is it advised that Dr. Luther do?" I asked, whereat Bucer answered that Von Sickengen's formidable castle, the Ebernburg, was not far off. Let him take refuge there, and negotiate at leisure. I sat in my saddle moodily. The advice seemed good, the peril undoubted, yet I knew that if my master turned aside from Worms when almost at its portal his name and fame were marred through all Germany. But while Amsdorf and I were silent, Dr. Martin dispensed with our feeble wisdom. He shot his words right into the face of the courier.

"Von Sickengen is a noble ritter. I thank him for his proffer. But he lives by the sword and will die by the sword. God's cause can prosper without him. And as for me, *though there be as many devils in Worms as there are tiles on the house-tops, yet will I go there. Drive onward.*"

That ended the debate. I knew that come good or come evil we would see Luther at Cæsar's judgment seat. It was with a mind very full of thoughts that I rode out of Oppenheim the next morning. A marvellous spring day was upon us. The little brooks and ditches were full of water running merrily. One could almost hear the sap oozing in the trees. The buds were just bursting, and all the boughs were in their young green feather. In the fields the red-kerchiefed peasant girls sang as they plied the mattocks or followed the plough, and overheard in the limpid sky the larks sang back to them. I could see that Dr. Martin was taking a delight nigh childish in the beauty of the hour.

"What a glorious day," he kept saying with simplicity, "and how rarely the birds sing. Ah! If we could count up

¹ Quite authenticated by history. — EDITOR.

the great charge God is at, only to maintain the birds and other creatures. Verily it must cost Him more than all the revenues of the King of France. If only I understood how many gulden it takes to sustain the larks, would I not be an incomparable master of theology !”

As for myself, however, my thoughts were wandering not a little, even from my master and the Cause. That morning a letter, carefully sealed, had been put in my hands by Gunter, with the curt remark that “later if I wished he would tell how Trude had gotten it to him.” Full secretly had I read, and thus it ran : —

“My aunt goes to Worms on business to the Pope’s legate touching our order. Prompted by some saint she declares she will take me as her companion. My brother also rides with us. Remember you are my knight, and wear my gage. May God keep us.”

No name, no address. Both had been utterly needless. I hid the letter in my bosom, but took it thence to kiss the writing a hundred times. At last I had to conjure myself roundly to “play not the love-lorn squire, but play the man.” And I plucked the letter forth no more. But you will not blame me if I did not spend all my thoughts on how to circumvent Monsignore Aleander at Worms.

“You, too, find this fine day makes you merry, Graf Walter,” said Luther once during the morning ride, and later I discovered that he had more than half divined the cause of my lightened spirits.

* * * * *

It was about noon, long after the frowning battlements, the red-roofed steep houses, and the vast, many towered minster of Worms, had been before our view, that the trumpeter above the gate blew boldly on his horn, — signal to all the crowded city that the man who had set all Germany by the ears had come to face his fate. Our little cavalcade

rolled over the drawbridge and into the shadow of the gatehouse; Deutschland rode first, shaking out his great banner, then the wagon with Luther and his three comrades, lastly myself with some few friendly ritters who had galloped out from Worms to meet us. It was dinner time, but by some art magic the tall gabled houses poured out their thousands into the busy street. Honorable quarters had been reserved for us at the House of the Knights of St. John, where the residence of the Saxon Elector would be close at hand. So great was the multitude Deutschland must needs lay about him with his baton to win us a way.

As I rode onward slowly, I could but tell myself that all the world had rushed together here for the Diet; save as we were privileged guests I doubt if we could ever have hired lodgings. The streets were full of blond Mecklinburgers and Pomeranians, dark Rhinelanders, dapper-dressed Frenchmen, olive-faced Spaniards, small Italians. Knights and clowns, peasants, burghers, and clerics were all elbowing indiscriminately to get their first glance of "*him*," whether they called the newcomer saint or heresiarch. I saw an Italian valet hanging close at our heels, and I was not surprised later to learn that he was a servant of Aleander the Legate, sent to bring his master particular word of the aspect of "*Mahomet*." Surely if Luther's courage did not fail him, if he had a true word to say at Worms, he could speak it so loud here that he could be heard by all the earth!

At the House of the Knights there did not lack a welcome from friends and an abundance of wordy counsel. Two of the Saxon Electors' intimate advisers were lodged at the same place. A good dozen of us sat down to dinner together. There were a thousand things to say, — what the Emperor thought, what each Elector thought, what the delegates of the Free Cities thought, what the Pope's legates demanded, what Franz von Sickingen had threatened, what would be

the probable procedure to-morrow, etc., *ad infinitum*. And through it all I could see Dr. Martin smiling sweetly yet soberly, answering with a nod here, a brief word there, and keeping his own counsel.

"Has he not determined? Is he resolved to retract?" muttered Von Thun the Counsellor in my ear half testily. "Surely he has not made all this journey without some fixed intention?"

To which I could only answer, "He has never committed himself to me."

"Pest take the man," grumbled the testy though friendly politician; "of all accursed things it is to be a theologian. 'If you believe so, I will concede so,' they say, when what the Emperor will want is a clear answer '*Sic*' or '*Non*.' Can we not make him understand?"

"Noble and excellent Counsellor," answered I with assurance, "I do not know what Dr. Luther will say, but I do know that he will give such answer as will not leave you, me, nor any man in the world, in doubt as to his meaning."

I could do no more for my master that day. Events must shape their course for a little. If there was more service which I could render, it would come later when Cæsar had spoken. Leaving Luther in the hands of his overzealous friends, I went to my own chambers, caused Andrea to change my dress so that I would appear merely as an inconspicuous ritter, and then went out unattended into the buzzing streets. Never was there a more polyglot crowd even by the Venetian Rialto. Spanish pikemen of the Imperial guard were declaiming in loud Castilian against the insipidity of German wines; there were a goodly number of giant-tall Swiss mercenaries in their bright, party colored clothes and great feathery-set hats, and ecclesiastics swarmed of every rank, condition, and order. Mountebanks and hucksters of all kinds of cheap and cheating wares, seemed everywhere, and

many none too prudish women. Carefree for the time, I wandered onward, catching snatches of conversation, much amused momentarily by a grave debate betwixt a Fleming and a Swabian as to whether Luther was able to fly and to make himself invisible by the black art, yet often touched by the manifest love and reverence with which vast numbers seemed to mention my master's name.

Knowing little of the winding streets, I let myself wander ever onward, guided by fancy, until at last I was under the shadow of the vast cathedral, and I saw sentries pacing with their halberds before the portals of the wall around the bishop's palace. Within I knew lodged the Emperor and the Papal legates. I might have announced my rank and demanded admission, but I was in no mood for playing the courtier, and I was turning away to find what else might amuse me in the city, when I came face to face with an Italian in a livery I knew like my own, blue and gold cut after the manner of the Forlis. Involuntarily I must have stopped and stared at him, the more so as his face was familiar, in an uncertain way, and he, seemingly amazed, also stood and gazed at me curiously, then recovering his wits more nimbly than I, swept off his biretta with a profound bow.

"Allow me to assure you, Eccellenza," spoke he in Italian, "that I am now as always very devotedly at your service."

"Diavolo! fellow," I answered, wholly aback. "I do not have the joy of your acquaintance."

"The Conte di Palaestro does not remember then a certain evening at the Vatican four years ago, the last evening I believe your Nobility spent in Rome for some time, when it was my great and grievous misfortune to be obliged, my own humble head being in jeopardy —"

"Good heavens, rascal," cried I, my wits at last serving me; "you are Ettore Orosi, the bravo!"

He bowed again with agile grace.

"Ettore Orosi, at that time a humble cavaliere of fortune, but now, praised be Santa Maria di Fiesoli, a gentleman servitor in the household of the Cardinal of Forli and that incomparable lady, Madonna Marianna."

"Forli, Marianna, are they here in Worms?"

"They arrived at the court three days since, Eccellenza, on an unofficial mission from His Holiness. It was at once reported at the palace that you were in the company of that much-debated friar, Signor Lutherio, and Madonna Marianna straightway commissioned me to ascertain your lodging place, and how she might communicate with you. You see I have been unexpectedly fortunate."

I own that for once in my life I was utterly at a loss what to do or to answer.

Both Marianna and Ilsa were to be in Worms !

BOOK III

THE VICTORY

CHAPTER XXVII

'TWIXT GABRIEL AND LUCIFER

HE beckoned me to follow and I made no resistance. Possibly I was unwise, but how scant had been the moment for reflection! In any case, I meditated, a German count of the Empire was not to be made away with at the Imperial Diet itself, even by such a personage as the Cardinal di Forli. Besides, a little tingle was going through my veins; come good, come evil, I was about to see Marianna. I stepped on boldly even when an inner voice prompted me, "turn back." Orosi, smiling fulsomely, led the way past the unquestioning sentinel into the interior of the episcopal palace. It was a huge rambling structure. As I penetrated one gray courtyard after another I seemed leaving Germany behind me, and stepping, with incredible rapidity, back into the Southland. The faces I saw were all dark and olivine, all Italian or Spanish. Above the gateways were festooned the banners of Naples, Palermo, Valencia, Cordova, Seville and a dozen other southern cities ruled by the Emperor. I heard the Tuscan and Sicilian dialects of Italy, as well as the differing tongues of Castile and Aragon. The armor of the mustachioed sentry at an inner gate was indubitably from Toledo. And now I began to pass courtiers all in elegant lace and silk garments that might have graced the court of Ferrara or Mantua.

Verily if *these* were folk of Kaiser Karl I knew the case of Luther was prejudged already!

But Orosi led onward without letting me tarry to analyze my sensations. We were at a doorway before which a pair of valets in the Forli livery squatted on the pavement killing their time with dice. They leaped up very nimbly, and their caps came off with abject bows at the upraised finger of my conductor. Orosi guided me at once into a dim hall, lighted by high and heavily curtained windows, and motioned to a spacious armchair.

"Eccellenza, if you will but deign to repose yourself a little, I will at once seek his Eminence and Madonna. They did not of course expect your fair advent so speedily, but I am sure you have not long to wait."

Before I could answer, I heard the heavy tassels of the arras clicking behind him; I was alone, alone waiting Marianna.

The chamber was a veritable segment of Italy. Forli had evidently travelled with all necessary furniture to make himself at home. The chairs were of dark wood, with elegant Florentine carving, and luxurious taffeta upholsteries; the rugs were from Constantinople, the walls were hidden by a series of tapestry cartoons depicting the taking of Carthage by Scipio the Younger. A genuine Roman brazier charged with charcoal sent off its fumes in one corner, dispelling the springtime chill. A Venetian lamp, swung from silver chains over my head, sent a faint ruby gleam through its dome of red crystal. There were books on the table; they proved to be a set of Poggio's *Facetiae*, and kindred free and merry stories, charmingly bound in white and purple vellum. The odor of the brazier, the dimly mysterious light, the looming of the vague figures on the cartoons, the red twinkling from the lamp, all produced for an instant an effect nigh intoxicating. I threw myself into the cushioned

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chair, and felt old memory and habits of mind surging back upon me like the billows cast up by an ever advancing tide of ocean.

Either because I was not expected or because of design I was held some slight time waiting. At last in a distant chamber I heard a step. Instantly all my senses quivered. I knew I was being profoundly affected, albeit very differently from the manner that other step had moved me when I waited in beggar's rags at the cold grille by Quedlinburg convent. Suddenly it came over me how even now I was very shabbily clad, and what a mean impression I must make upon any one beholding me. I was execrating all the luck which had involved me in this immediate adventure, when the tapestry parted; Marianna di Forli came straight into my presence.

She wore a light blue cendal gown that fell straight down from her shoulders, the height of art in its simplicity. A thin gold chain was her girdle. Her only ornament was a large brooch on her shoulder, but the brooch was set with a Greek antique cameo of vast beauty and price. In the great coil of her dark hair she had set a single white spring flower. In that twilight her face seemed to stand out as a thing self illumined, diffusing its own white light.

"Gualtiero!" she cried, in her musical native tongue, "Gualtiero! I have missed you so long. Oh! blessed, blessed hour to bring you!"

She held both her hands to me, opening her arms wide; but the sight of her, the sound of her voice, had snapped the spell that momentarily bound me. Very deliberately, with studied courtesy I fell on one knee, took her right hand coldly to my lips, and kissed it formally. Then I rose and stood with bowed head, but at safe distance.

"You must pardon me, Madonna," said I, "if this interview slightly overwhelms me; only a very few hours since have I entered Worms, and it was by the merest fortune that

I rambled out by the palace and was confronted by Orosi. I consented that he lead me to you, perhaps without considering whether an interview would lead to mutual happiness or the reverse."

She drew back, and the muscles of her neck seemed to twitch.

"Your words are cold as your northern wind, Gualtiero, all the spark and fire is gone out of them. Can three years away from Italy change so much? destroy habit, thought, memory? Do you not remember the Corso, and the Vatican gardens, and the boats on the Tiber, and the Carnival, and the fiestas of roses, and —"

I folded my arms across my breast.

"I forget none of them, Madonna."

"Santo Spirito, and do you never long for them? Are you turned all to ice?"

"Not quite," I replied gently.

"Then I," and her eyes shot fire, "demand in the name of that passion which once you will not deny blazed swift and hot, — what marvel has wrought this change?"

"You will never understand, Madonna," I answered slowly, "not though my speech went far into the night. The North has claimed me; I am of my father's world and not of my mother's. The North has claimed me, and the Cause, which is so great."

"The Cause? I cannot understand."

"I said you could not. Once you laughed at us Germans, called us winebibbers and fools; we are stirring now. Once you mocked at our friar Martin Luther; he is giving the Monsignori gloomy evenings now. Great things are coming to pass, and greater things will follow. Here in Worms we may hear words that will be remembered so long as men read books; for the Cause is moving to triumph, and he who aids therein is aiding even God."

"Your words are Italian," she said, misdoubtingly, "but your thought still is all hid. What is this Cause? explain."

"The Cause is the Word of God as spoken by Luther, and from him caught by the world."

She threw her hands over her head and laughed. The laugh grated. It was scornful and evil.

"At last! at last! Well, I could have thought as much. Still bewitched by that babbling demon of an excommunicate friar. My father and I will have to learn how to disenchant you."

"In that case you must prove wiser than Merlin, for I swear to you, never went cavalier more earnestly on his crusade than I on this."

She paused one shrewd instant. Some instinct told me that she was bidding herself not to press a dangerous point, but to seek other means of vantage.

"Come, Gualtiero," she resumed, holding out one hand winningly, "three years is a long time. At Palaestro we parted in a quarrel, let us not meet again only to renew it. We have always liked each other better after quarrelling. Do you remember the fearful war we had because I believed you had given those pearls to that Carlotta di Empoli, and how we were vastly more devoted than ever, after the wretched thing was made up? Yes? Well then, here we will sit together. These cushions are filled with silk floss from Parma. Old Cardinale di Piombo swears there is nothing more comfortable, and surely he is the softest liver in the whole conclave. After all, what is it to me if you wish to run after a heretic friar or the very Maestro Diavolo himself if but your 'Cause' does not keep you in this vile Germany. O *Miseria!* But what a dress you have on! Very foul and worn even for this dreadful country. You have already paid for your folly towards the heretic by being brought to poverty?"

"I have still sufficient revenues," said I dryly, not without

inward meditation as to whether Marianna's attitude would alter if I avowed myself poor. "I am wearing this dress simply to avoid remark upon the streets."

"Happy relief then to my fears! Now I will ask you, as if you were at the confessional, and do you answer. Are you married?"

"No."

"Are you betrothed?"

"No."

"Are you in love?"

I could have cut her tongue out. I saw heavy disadvantages either in telling the truth, or framing any reasonable manner of a lie.

"You need not press that question, Marianna," I returned sharply.

"But you equivocate, proof enough you are truly in love. Fie, do not think I am going to be angry. Every one must amuse himself. Declare the lady."

"I have forbidden you to interrogate."

"*Buono!* only one question, then; is she that Ilsa—such I swear was the name—whose father held the castle close to yours? Am I not right? You are blushing."

"The lady whereof you ask has entered the convent. As a nun she is beyond all our discussions."

Marianna's hands floated out and her long fingers moved in a gesture as if she were untangling spider webs.

"Oh, simple, simple Gualtiero! Do you not think I can see through you as through yonder goblet of Venetian glass? Do you think that while you have been running about Germany for the sake of your mad heretic, I have not been informed by a dozen correspondents about you. Did not many letters report 'The Graf von Regenstein, rumor has it, made offers of marriage to Ilsa von Blankenburg, but she rejecting his proffer has entered the convent?' And lo!

now by your own silence and blushes you confess to the secret that you, *you* who preach to us Italians of your serious purpose and your zeal for your 'Cause,' are actually engaged in the quest of a nun!"

I let her wander on even farther, while I slowly readjusted my wits.

"Yet you might spare your blushes, Gualtiero. Wiser and cleverer men than you have loved nuns, yes, and been none the worse for it. The nephew of his one-time Holiness, Urban the Sixth, had such an intrigue, and the indulgent Pope actually issued a dispensation to him and let him marry the wench. You might get the same, though if truth be told, you have not ingratiated yourself with the Vatican lately. Still if you have kept your fortune —"

But here I rose to my feet.

"Marianna di Forli," spoke I, and my voice shook, "if you would converse with me as friend and not as foe, do not let the name of that nun again cross your lips. What we are to each other and what we will be to each other is something so high, so holy, so ineffable that never in any tongue I can speak could you learn to understand me. I have no intrigue with the lady you have so lightly named, and I forbid you to discuss her further."

"Then Dante sighs hopelessly from afar for his Beatrice," said she, demurely; "very good, I merely wished to show that I was not playing the part of jealousy."

"What part you are playing, Madonna," I replied sourly, "I confess is to me quite hid, the more as by your own confession you have kept a marvellously sharp watch upon my doings. You know, then, that I am utterly committed to the cause of that Wittenberg friar whom the Church, with paternal benignity, is seeking to consign to the flames. You know that I broke with you finally at Palaestro. What now are you seeking?"

She looked up at me steadily, striving to catch me with her glorious eyes. If mortal could have been ensnared by a pagan goddess, I were lost hopelessly.

"Hear then, Gualtiero," spoke she, and her voice rose and sobbed like some plaintive æolian harp, "hear then, I come to save you from yourself."

"Myself? Am I my own enemy?"

"Your own worst enemy, Gualtiero. Your own noble qualities betray you. You were nurtured in Italy, but a false loyalty to your father's last injunctions held you to a destructive pride in your German ancestry. Because you dreamed you found something noble in the utterances of that Wittenberg heretic, you also dreamed it was your duty to defend him. Even as your forefathers deemed it noble to toss their lives away against the infidel, one man against twenty, so you, again hopelessly beset, have allowed your fine chivalry to ruin you. You dwell in a world of dreams, of gossamer hopes, of unrealities. You have followed this friar even to Worms. Then your foam bubble will burst. What will you find? A heretic's bonfire, your friends' favor forfeited, your fortune imperiled, your body and soul jeopardized by the ban of the Church. And from all this I — I, who have been so much to you, will save you yet."

"I thank you for your solicitude, Madonna," was my rejoinder. I confess when she spoke of "unrealities" I thought of our life at Palaestro, and could scarce suppress a smile.

"You are not grateful—now. Ah! I understand that very well. But you will thank me hereafter. Come"—she caught at my sleeve, "sit once more, side by side as in the olden days. Let us pretend these are the Vatican gardens, and we are under the roses by the Pope's belvedere. Far away are they not, but we will see them again. You will not, you will not refuse even this?"

Her voice trembled, but I stood before her obdurate. I remembered that other hour at Mainz when honor spoke one voice, and Marianna another, and Marianna had prevailed. But, thank God, I was stronger now. She was looking up at me with every manner of entreaty springing out of her eyes,—the entreaty of a Cleopatra saying to Antonius, "Choose now, Rome or me?" But I, looking upon her, yet beyond her, saw other figures whom she might not see, a figure in the veil of a nun, a figure in the cowl of a friar. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" were the words that almost crossed my teeth, but I would not wound too harshly. I only removed her hand gently from my sleeve and motioned her away.

"You talk of that which can never be, Madonna," I said. "I am sorely grieved that you will still live in memory."

"In memory?" she cried, her voice now rising almost to a shriek, "in memory? And can the memory of a Roman woman ever die? Because I have laughed and lived merrily do you think that I have never loved you? Oh! Santa Maria! one need not turn nun every time one has a broken heart. Curse me, beat me, flay me, slay me, do not say you will quit me forever!"

Alas for Marianna! even as she cast herself at my feet in a paroxysm of tears, I was reflecting, "How far is this real, how far the actress?" This scene however I well knew could not be prolonged. With a pitilessness I did not wholly feel, I drew myself up haughtily.

"Noble lady," I spoke distantly; "If in the past I have erred by giving you friendship and more than friendship, I am heartily repentant. The wrong that I may have done to you I may never be able to efface. So heaven orders things — that much of evil cannot be undone, however much the doer would. If you have had your bitter hours in past years, believe me I have had mine. Believe me, too, God has

laid His comforting hand upon me and given me a peace and hope such as not Filelfo or Chrysoloras or Porphyry or Plato or any other of those philosophers we worshipped at Rome could give. I have chosen my path with open eyes, and I follow it boldly. It may lead through the sunlight, may lead under only the starlight, nay clouds and darkness may wrap thick about me. The path is still before me. I will follow. For you I will ever crave that peace which neither the world nor the Church as you know it can give. Curse you I will not, and I will remember you often and not with hate, but for the final time I say it, your path you must follow, and leave me free to follow mine."

I bowed ceremoniously and moved toward the door. She lifted her face towards me; it was struggling with entreaty.

"Never, never, never will I give you up!" she cried, then fell in a heap upon the chair.

Without more adieus I thrust aside the tapestries, and strode past many gazing menials, much amazed to see a shabbily clad man burst from the inner apartments of the Cardinal. Fortunately no one strove to halt me. In a moment I was past the last sentry, and in the street, lighted by the last sunshine of the waning afternoon. Italy and all its strange visions seemed vanished behind me. I heard the pompous Geheimrat of some Pomeranian princeling cursing in broadest Low German at the inattention of his varlets. The very oaths seemed good to hear. I strode over to a convenient beer house, and quaffed a stein of good brown Nürnberger.

"Realities?" I spoke to myself; "here are the realities, — the life to live and the death to die. I have escaped from Merlin and his house of dreams."

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The crowds in the street had hardly thinned. Never, save at the Venice carnivals, had I seen greater multitudes. "Luther," "Luther," seemed on every tongue.

"He will recant," I heard an earnest-faced young student declaiming to a fellow; "Holy God strengthen him, but he will recant. Pope, Emperor, princes, priests are all against him. Flesh and blood are not made to endure such things, he will retract all his books to-morrow."

"And yet," answered the second student more confidently, "when I caught his eye this noon, I said, 'that is not the face of one whom fiend or man can frighten.' I still hope he will stand fast."

"Ay, so I pray every hour," rejoined the first somberly; "for the day he retracts is the blackest day that has ever set for Germany, after such a dawn of hope of better things! But —"

Here we were swept asunder and I caught no more of their hopes or fears. A moment later I was behind two black-cloaked Dominicans. Easily enough one seized the thread of their talk.

"I tell you, Sebaldus, this hideous leniency has already nigh wrecked the Church. A few good faggots two years ago should have ended everything. But first Caietanum tarried, then the Pope, and now finally the Emperor. The blessed Dominic grant we see the end of this Anti-Christ to-morrow. Will they execute him here or send him to Rome?"

"The legates Aleander and Forli have done their uttermost to have him clapped under arrest already, but alas! the Emperor hesitates."

"Hesitates? Great God! as a Christian prince how can he hesitate in his duty?"

"Why, my dear brother, he has most unfortunate scruples about that matter of a safe conduct which he issued."

"And *he* hesitates to violate it? As if faith were to be kept with Turks and heretics! Let him remember how Kaiser Sigismund piously let the safe conduct he gave to Hus be set aside, for as the King of Aragon then said, 'Faith is

not to be kept with those who have not kept faith with God.”

“Aptly spoken, like a true doctor of the Church. And — heaven grant — even if the Emperor prove over-scrupulous, there will be a short way found with the wretch. I am told that the Cardinal of Forli said — ”

But here, just as I would have given fifty gulden for the rest of their talk, the two turned down an unfrequented lane, whither it was impossible for me to follow undetected.

The conversation, however, made me exceeding thoughtful. Clearly all that I might do for Luther was not at end. If there were any pious projects against Luther entertained by his Eminence of Forli, it was not for me to ignore them. And as for Orosi, I was certain that the redoubted bravo was not serving the Cardinal simply as postilion. I therefore quickened my steps back toward the house of the Knights of St. John. The day was fading into twilight, the hucksters and merchants were illuminating their shops and booths with innumerable red torches that cast a flickering radiance upon the moving crowds, and gave the streets of Worms more the aspect of a fête than of a sedate grave German city. I was almost again at our quarters when the folk in the narrow street were thrust aside by the passing of a small cavalcade. I saw a few mounted retainers, a stately ritter in half armor, and behind him, with sweeping white robes, a lady abbess upon her palfrey. Behind the abbess rode several women, hooded and cloaked in black.

“Give way, honest people,” cried the leading rider; “way for their High Nobilities the Abbess of Quedlinburg and the Graf von Blankenburg !”

The crowd opened good naturedly, but a lumbering vintner’s cart in the street ahead made very slow progress. The cavalcade fell to a walk. As for me, I stopped for an instant like a man stark mad, and then guided more by instinct than

reason, kept pace with the little company, edging nearer until I was close to the women who followed the abbess. I had not long to seek. Would I not have known to pick that rider on the darkest night and amid a hundred?

I was almost against her side-saddle, and the noise of the street rose in a babel hum around me, when I suddenly spoke in a voice low and clear.

"Ilsa, here I am."

Under the black cape there was a startled quaking and rustling, but was I not proud of my Lady, when with hardly an instant's hesitation came the softly spoken answer.

"I am trusting you to do nothing foolish, Walter."

"Your trust is safe," I answered; "I am guarding Dr. Luther. But is Trude in your company?"

"She is."

"Then since her father is with me, all is well. I have your letter."

The wagon had been turned from the way. "Forward!" came the shout. I heard the riders ahead slap their horses. From under the black cape stole a white hand; there was just the chance for me to touch the tips of the fingers. Ilsa's palfrey caught the stride of the others. I sprang back, spattered with mud. The whole had been done so quickly Abbess Theckla could have known nothing. And so in one afternoon, almost in one hour, I had words with two women who were making or marring my life. I stood marvelling at my strange fortune, and still more at the strange manner of our meeting — so different, so utterly different.

On turning in at the house of the Knights of St. John I told myself it would be very easy later to ascertain the lodging place of so important a personage as the Abbess of Quedlinburg, but for the moment I had enough else to busy me. Poor Dr. Luther was still beset by a host of well intentioned friends thrusting upon him all manner of bad advice. There

could be no doubt that the Emperor had formed an unfriendly opinion of him and that more than half of Worms expected him to retract at least the more extreme of his writings.

"If you will merely recall two or three of the pamphlets," I remember a Saxon councillor urging patronizingly, "say the 'Babylonish Captivity' and that violent last 'Letter to the Pope,' why it's quite possible there will be very little urged against the others."

And I, knowing Dr. Luther, could see the quiet twinkle in his eyes, serious, yet not unmerry as he took all these friendly words in silence. At last he looked around, and on his face was the old smile so familiar in Wittenberg.

"Ach! dear Christian friends. There is a good verse of Scripture, spoken I think for such poor wights as I, in cases like these 'When they bring you unto the magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.'"

"But reverend Doctor," cried Von Thun, "it cannot be you are without a well considered course of action?"

"Noble Privy Councillor," answered my master, "Years ago when I lay very sick at Erfurt, when I was only a young student, and I was in great fear of death, there came to me an old priest, pious and good, who spoke, saying, 'Take courage. You shall not now die, our God will yet make you an instrument for the comforting of many.' And by God's mercy, that prophesy has not proved vain. Nor do I think," and his voice rose a little, "I have yet reached the end of that service appointed unto me. When I stand before Cæsar, I shall, heaven willing, say that which will make no friend of mine ashamed."

Nothing more could any man get out of him. Seeing that he was surely weary, Amsdorf and I at length sent the busybodies away. I stationed Gunter, Adolf, and Andrea, well

armed, around Dr. Luther's chamber, and myself lay down in the next room with a ready sword and pistols. Nothing, however, disturbed us that night. Fatigued myself with all the strange sights and vicissitudes, I slept soundly, interrupted only by the rumbling of the city cart that coursed the streets after midnight, to carry home the toppers left sprawling in the gutters after a riotous evening.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BEHOLD, HE PRAYETH

ON the afternoon of the 17th of April, Luther was conducted before the Diet to answer to the charges of heresy. The morning was passed by my master very calmly, reading, writing, and actually going from his lodgings to visit, console, and administer the sacrament to a sick Saxon knight. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when the peasant-born friar, who had set knights, bishops, electors by the ears, with cardinals, Pope, and Emperor to boot, was conducted before the assembled estates of the Holy Roman Empire. But of this first assembly, and all who were there and what passed, I omit the details, seeing that this audience before the Diet was but the prelude to the real ordeal.

Of all the friends and foes who looked so curiously on him that day, I think all but a few were sorely amazed at his conduct. "He will recant," or "He will stand firm,"—one saying or the other had been on every tongue. But I, and one or two more, who had communed with him often, were not so surprised. Well did we understand how Martin Luther looked upon this audience as the crisis of his life, and, trusting none the less in heaven, was not the least resolved to blunder through lack of temporal circumspection and worldly wisdom. So when the "Official General," who conducted the interrogations for the Emperor, having put the preliminary questions, asked if he would repudiate or withdraw his books alleged heretical, and when all ears were bent for a sturdy "yea" or "nay," on the contrary, Luther in mild voice answered that the matter was one of great

moment and touched upon "the salvation of souls." If he spoke without due consideration he might be over-bold, run into sore peril, and incur God's wrath; therefore he entreated time for deliberation, "that he might answer the interrogation without injury to the Divine Word, or peril to his own soul."

There was a buzz among the princes, a whispering betwixt the Emperor and Aleander, the lowering Papal legate. With some asperity the Imperial spokesman made answer that Luther surely knew wherefore he had been summoned and what might be asked of him; nevertheless, that he might have fair play, four-and-twenty hours were given him. Then he must be ready with his answer.

After that came adjournment and more whisperings, and I knew that Luther had neither lost a friend nor conciliated an enemy. Almost as I was passing out I heard the rumor that Charles had said "This man will never make a heretic of me." But the multitude were otherwise minded. A great cheering throng followed us back to our lodgings, there were *vivats* and *bravoes*, and once a shrill woman's voice, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee!" Best of all, soon after our coming to the house of the Knights, the cortège of no less a person than the mighty Landgraf von Hessen himself halted before it, and youthful Prince Philip dismounted to wring my master's hand, and to say in parting, "Dear Doctor, if you are in the right, so may the Lord God help you."

Then the darkness sent the crowds away, and even the officious Saxon councillors had the grace to refrain from thrusting in their presence.

"Well," complained one busy body, "your Wittenberg friar may be a mighty theologian, and well able to refute a whole Church Council, but has he no pity on us all? Must Diet and Emperor twirl their thumbs with curiosity whilst he makes up his mind?"

"Be graciously patient, noble Geheimrat," spoke I, bowing him toward the door; "you will be amply satisfied on the morrow."

"Heaven grant it," he fumed, going out, and I turned back into the room where, very characteristically, my master was bent over the broad table, a candle at either elbow. He wrote rapidly, but soon threw down the sheet so that Amsdorf and myself could read the broad, sprawling hand. It was a letter to Guspianus, a literary friend in Vienna, in which he told briefly the events of the day, and then clearly written at the end stood out these words, "*But I shall not withdraw a single jot, Christ helping me!*"

Amsdorf and I handed back the paper, having perused in silence.

"Ei! my friends," cried Luther, leaning back in his chair, and stretching his great broad arms above his head, "have you nothing to say, no warnings, no prudence, like all these other good folk?"

Amsdorf looked at me, and seeing I was tongue-tied, answered:—

"Dear Doctor, we have long since committed you into God's keeping. Wisdom and words we have not of our own."

Luther arose, and without speaking a syllable, embraced us both silently,—the hearty warm embrace of an elder brother. His face twitched a little. We knew that his hour was come. Silently we returned the clasp and took our leave, realizing that for him solitude was now the truest refreshment. As I passed out I could see his dark figure outlined against the candle-light, and already unconscious of our hearing he was repeating the words of Ezekiel of old.

"Behold I the Lord have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads; as an adamant harder than flint, have I made thy forehead. Fear them not, neither be dismayed."

"Amsdorf," spoke I, my own heart welling over, "though we live a thousand years we shall not hear or see things greater than shall come to pass to-morrow."

"Can you sleep to-night?" he asked.

"Impossible," I returned, and we sat down together in our own chamber, and tried desperately to while away the hours by a game of chess. Once or twice I listened at Dr. Luther's door. Once I heard him repeating the Scripture, once I heard the notes of his lute touched softly, to some gentle wailing lay of his Saxon hills, and I knew that he was trying, as so often, "to rout the devil" with music.

The clock struck midnight when our game was disturbed by a gentle knock at our door.

"May I enter, Eccellenza?" Andrea was asking, and glided in before I could answer "yes."

He had his stiletto drawn, and his eyes were gleaming like jet beads. Instantly I sprang to my feet, whipping out my own rapier.

"Danger?" I demanded.

"Si, Signore. Great danger to Messere Luther. Heretic he may be, I do not know," he crossed himself, "but he is your friend. That is enough for Andrea. The Conte has seen Ettore Orosi?"

"A thousand fiends, yes!"

"Then believe me, Ettore Orosi and four others like him, an Italian, with three Germans,—greasy oafs,—are to be under Dottore Luther's window ere many minutes. And then — prut!"

"Fellow, fellow," cried I, "how did you know this? It is impossible that the Pope's legates should stoop to such a deed even against a heretic. The Emperor's wrath would be terrible."

"His Holiness's legates? oh, no, Signore! Their pious hands will be very clean. Ettore Orosi and his band do this

independently, from pure love of Holy Church. Perhaps there may be temporal rewards for their zeal; but these will be later. Yet believe me, it has not been for nothing Andrea has been hanging around the palace kitchens all the evening, and making himself friendly to the comely scullery maids."

"We must summon help," spoke Amsdorf with a hand upon my arm.

"Help?" I replied, "with Gunter and Adolf within reach, with Andrea here, and you and I hale and strong? Not so. If Ettore Orosi desires a swift road to hell, we are well able to give him the post-horses."

"At least, let me caution Dr. Luther," and he started for the inner door, but I detained him.

"Dr. Luther has battles enough to fight to-night, without this one. We will fight it for him. Come."

Already the indefatigable Andrea had roused my two watch dogs. Adolf and Gunter came in, cursing softly, but with their weapons, and we held a hasty council-of-war. The information which Andrea had wormed out of an over-talkative serving-maid gave no clear notion of the nature of the attack, but we could guess its method. To penetrate to the apartments of Dr. Luther from the side of the house fronting upon the street would necessitate forcing several well-barred doors, and was to the last degree impossible. But on the other side his windows opened upon a small garden surrounded by a wall readily scaled by active men, and behind this wall ran a dark narrow alley giving the easiest imaginable access.

Our deliberations were brief and effective. Leaving my second valet and Adolf's nephew, a tall, burly Regensteiner, to guard the inner house, the rest of us took our way quietly by a back passage to the little garden where a few bushes in the corner made a sufficient covert against the wall. We were armed; even the pacific Amsdorf, who was no feeble man

physically, had accepted a sabre and pistol. I was similarly accoutered, but Andrea insisted that I pull on my ring mail of proof, a splendid piece of Florentine armorer's craft, that made me almost as impregnable as Achilles. Andrea himself had only his long stiletto, but I knew he could use that to greater effect than a Moor his scimitar. As for Gunter and Adolf, in addition to their ponderous swords, they tugged along arquebuses crammed with enough bullets to mow down a small army. In silence we took our stations; they whispered briefly as to our respective parts in the impending drama. Nothing was left but the most trying part of the ordeal, silence.

It was a weird enough and uncanny situation, after the glow of excitement began to wane, as I squatted in silence with my fellows on the damp chill earth, peering into the dark, and straining my ears for those first sounds which would betoken the assassins. The night was not absolutely black. Heavy banks of clouds moved across the moon, which occasionally peered out with a yellow half-orb, and sent a flying gleam of light across the garden wall. Again the shadows would become so black as to be almost impenetrable. The wind had shifted to the north and sang down the Rhine valley damp and chill, making me glad I had drawn an extra doublet over my ring shirt; and even then betwixt mingled cold and excitement I found my teeth a-chatter. Tall and dark above us loomed the lofty roofs and the dim outlines of the sombre chimneys. Once or twice I heard a clattering of the storks far up upon the eaves. We waited in cold, impatience, and discomfort, a time that seemed interminable. Presently the minster clock boomed "one," and I heard the city watchman go clattering down the street with his staff and lantern, chanting his "Cover your fires and bar your doors," as if any honest man would be awake at that hour to hear him. Other life there seemed nowhere, save in

Dr. Luther's apartment, where a rushlight and candles still burned, and where once or twice across the open lattice I saw his figure pass.

I was beginning to misdoubt the whole business, and to tell myself that it was folly to imagine that even Italians would be mad enough to outrage the German nation by trying to murder its hero on the eve of his crisis day. I was edging over to Andrea to seek again for his story, and to pin him down to some proof that we were waiting for anything more perilous than a fine ague, when Adolf — whose wise old ears were like a lynx's — gave a low "hist!" Instantly I *knew*, rather than heard, that some one was moving down the alley behind us. We clinched our weapons, while I felt — thanks to my quickened heart beats — that every sense of cold had vanished. We heard feet approaching stealthily, I soon judged of a party of about five men.

The strangers were conversing in whispers, but it was long ere we caught a word. Right past us, with only the thin brick garden wall between, they went quietly as cats, but quite audibly. They actually passed beyond the house of the Knights, and I was thinking they were not our expected guests, when a warning word from one of the party halted the rest.

"Turn around," commanded a muffled voice, "you have gone beyond the house."

"You are sure it is this one?" asked another, in accents betraying a very poor command of German.

"Quite sure. I went down the alley three times to-day. I remember the chimneys. Dr. Luther's chambers are on the first floor, directly against the garden."

"Buono! Signore," spoke the non-German again, and I surely recognized Orosi, "then it is over the wall and into the house. Ecco! I will display to you the deed of a real virtuoso, of a true son of Italy. Your clumsy Tedesci shall behold and admire!"

"We will admire you on the gallows, you long-tongued magpie," growled the other, "if you do not keep a quieter tongue, or I, Hans Lange, am no prophet. I am well paid for this task, or I would drop it even now. Quick now! *Frisch!* Up and over; but silent as tombstones. There's no time for mumbling."

Adolf and Gunter had silently set the wheel-locks of their arquebuses, and now levelled at the crest of the wall, clearly visible, to take the first cutthroat as he should appear, but I knocked up their barrels.

"Let them in," I muttered; "all are then at our mercy."

In an instant a tall figure stood on the narrow parapet, then sprang boldly inside, landing on the slippery earth and sending the clods in our faces. A second, a third, a fourth, a fifth followed. The last two I knew clearly enough, by the flutter of their garments, were Italians, but the first three were Germans, Swabian lanz-knechts who would pawn their souls cheerfully for a little drink money. There they stood, those five men of blood, each doubtless with more sins than they had hairs. Before them, clearly in view, was the open lattice of Dr. Luther, the sill so low as to be easily scaled by a vigorous man; not fifteen feet away in the shadow of the wall stood we. Adolf and Gunter had covered the gang with their arquebuses, Amsdorf and I raised our pistols. All waited to follow my fire. Surely if ever heaven delivered Amalek into the hands of Israel, these five wild spirits were delivered into mine. And yet, though I knew God and man would justify me in instant execution, I hesitated. It was too much like slaying in cold blood. These creatures deserved the law of the chase as little as kites or wolves, but to mow them down before they had so much as regained their wind seemed an unknighly thing.

Lange, the tallest, burliest, and evidently the conductor of the gang, forgot his own prudence and swore a round oath

over the slipperiness of the ground. Then I saw him stretch out an arm.

"Here is the window," he announced; "see, the Reverend Doctor is still at his studies. We shall not need to awaken him."

"No," retorted Orosi, and I could imagine his grimace, "we are kind physicians, the noble heretic suffers from wakefulness, we will make him sleep, a fine draught, see!" And I caught the faint glint of a dagger.

"Curses on us," growled one German, "for not bringing firearms. A shot through the window."

"Would arouse the town, and get us torn in pieces. No, he was right. Cold steel is the best." (Whom "he" was, I could never discover; possibly Forli, possibly some less ecclesiastical instigator.)

"Well, lads," adjured Lange, softly, "swift and sure is our game. You have the cloak to cast over his head ere he can scream, then one good blow quells him."

They moved together towards the window. Aiming as we were, no earthly power seemed able to save that band the moment the finger of the first touched the sill. But suddenly they halted, and instinctively our levelled tubes sank. Clearly outlined in the window we saw Dr. Luther.

For an instant I was disconcerted. We dared not fire from our present positions lest we strike our beloved friend. I was in mortal fear lest they spring in and stab him ere we could fly to the rescue. I was about to drop my pistol, draw my rapier, and charge to the attack, when Dr. Luther's deep voice sounded out over that silent garden. Stranger words those cutthroats never had heard, I swear.

In the candle-light we could see Dr. Luther's face upturned, his hands clasped and upraised.

"O God! God! God!" he spoke, and a quiver went through the murderous five.

"He's muttering spells," I caught from one lanz-knecht.
"He's devoting us all to perdition."

"Don't be a fool, Rudbert," urged Lange, in a dangerously loud whisper. "We'll have him the easier now."

"Wait! Bad luck to strike while a man's praying. Wait!"

In a flash of moonlight, I could see Orosi cross himself nervously. The whole band stirred. Had Dr. Luther's thoughts been on anything mundane, he would have easily discovered them gazing up at him blank and spellbound.

"O God! God! God!" repeated Dr. Luther, still at the window, and we all, attackers and defenders, stood silently gazing at him, as do men in a catalepsy. Then at last his struggling emotions found their shape. He began to pray aloud, unconscious of everything around.

"Almighty and Eternal God, how is it there is but one thing to be seen upon earth! How the people open wide their mouths! How mean and insignificant is their trust in God! How tender and weak the flesh, and how mighty and active the devil, working through his apostles, and those wise in the world! How the world draws back the hand and snarls, as it runs the common course, the broad way down to hell! It regards only what is pretentious, powerful, great and mighty. If I should turn my eyes in that direction, it would be all over with me, the clock would strike the hour, and sentence would be passed. O God! O God! O God! Do Thou my God stand by me against all the world's wisdom and reason."

"Holy Mother help us," I heard one lanz-knecht muttering, "you have brought us here to murder a saint. We are damned!"

"A wizard," spoke Orosi, but I knew he had sheathed his dagger. Still sounded the voice of Luther.

"O my God do it! Thou must do it! Yea, Thou alone

must do it ! Not mine but Thine is the Cause. For my own self, I can do nothing against these great earthly lords. Peaceful days I would have chosen, and days afar from this sore strife. But Thine, O Lord, is this cause : righteous it is and eternal. Stand by me, then, Thou true and ever-lasting God ! For in no man do I put my trust." (By this time the five cutthroats had slunk back to the wall, and would have gone farther, save that they lacked strength and courage to scale it. Luther prayed on.) "All that is of the flesh and that savors of flesh is here of no account. God, O God, dost Thou not hear me ? Art Thou verily dead ? No. Thou canst not die, Thou art only hiding Thyself. Hast Thou chosen me for this work ? I ask Thee how I may be sure of this, if it be Thy will, for I would never have thought in all my life of undertaking aught against such mighty lords."

"Hence ! Hence or we are damned forever !" The command came very audibly from Hans Lange. "There is not money enough in all Germany to make me do this devil's work." With one bound he cleared the wall, and vanished.

"O you Tedesci cowards," snarled Orosi, "scared as old women !" but he was the second to leap. The others followed like a herd of goats. As for ourselves, we stood transfixed. It was beyond my power to break that spell, to nip the villains even as they were escaping from our hands. Dr. Luther's voice rang out again, swelling with an indescribable emotion.

"Stand by me, O God, in the name of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, who shall be my defence and strength, yea my mighty fortress, through the might and strength of the Holy Ghost. Lord, where abidest Thou ? Thou art my God : where art Thou ? Come ! come ! I am ready to lay down my life patiently as a lamb. For the Cause is right and it is Thine, so I shall never be separated from Thee. Let all be done in

Thy name! The world must leave my conscience unconstrained; and, although it should be full of devils, and my body, Thy creation, be rent into fragments, yet are Thy Word and Spirit good unto me. All this can befall only the body. The soul is Thine and belongs to Thee, and shall abide with Thee eternally. Amen. God help me. Amen.”¹

Silence at last. Victorious in his wrestlings, comforted it seemed in his spirit, Dr. Luther’s form vanished from the window. The alley behind us was absolutely still. The five cutthroats had fled, routed by a mightier power than our steel and gunpowder, nor did they ever know how justly they had feared damnation as the price of lingering. After a while I let Adolf search the alley. It was empty. Lange, Orosi, and their confederates had not waited. There was nothing more to fear that night.

I kept one of my retainers on watch in the garden until dawn, but his presence was useless. Amsdorf and I returned to our chambers. Dr. Luther’s light was still burning, but we heard nothing from him and did not disturb his meditations. With my mail shirt still about me and my weapons beside me I cast myself upon a hard oaken bench and caught a few hours sleep. In a troubled dream I thought myself a crusader toiling over the sand deserts of Palestine, a scanty company behind me, a clamorous host of the Infidel before. My lance was in rest. I was riding to the charge wholly conscious that in one brief moment of the delirium of battle my life would be snuffed out. Yet I was glad, rapturously glad. My blood was tingling, my senses alert. From my lance whipped the Regenstein banner. To my lips came the name of my lady, whose gage I would bear worthily to this last battle.

“Ilsa!” I cried; “for God, the Cause, and Ilsa!”

¹ The verbal accuracy of the prayer here quoted is vouched for by first-class tradition. — EDITOR.

My own voice awoke me. The sun was streaming in at the diamond-paned windows. In the streets the noisy folk were passing. I rose and pressed my head.

"The day!" I repeated aloud. "O holy Heaven, I thank Thee I am permitted to live through this day."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WITNESS BEFORE CÆSAR

It was April 18, 1521 A.D., the day looked forward to by millions throughout broad Germany. Would the friar, the peasant's son, recant before the princes, bishops, and Emperor, or would he stand fast? Worms was divided into two hostile camps. Men almost came to blows on the street corners. "He will retract." "He will not." I found even the horseboys arguing it, when I made a chance visit to our stables.

We had not deemed it necessary to inform Dr. Luther of our little adventure in the night time, but I communicated enough to Deutschland, the imperial herald, so that he caused two or three reliable men-at-arms to be stationed around the house of the Knights to scrutinize all visitors, and I knew well enough that Emperor Charles, little as he might love heretics, would fight against them as became a lion and not a snake, and would visit condign punishment on any would-be assassins. If Luther had wished any time for deliberation it was well he spent the night at his vigils; he had small peace all that day. His apartments literally swarmed with well-meaning friends. Bucer had ridden over from the Ebernberg with more letters and promises of military succour from Franz von Sickingen. Saxon noblemen flocked to see Luther all the morning long, greeting him with bluff heartiness and proffering much homely cheer. "Herr Doctor," ran their honest talk, "how are you? People say you are going to be burned. That will never do. That would ruin

everything." And my master, with untroubled brow and a fresh and steady voice (as if he had had a peaceful sleep), answered them in kind; never downcast, never boastful, but wholly cheerful, until, as one visitor said to me when leaving, "You would think he was going to a hair-splitting debate of harmless theologians to-day, and not before the Estates and Emperor." Only Amsdorf and I, who had heard that prayer flung out into the garden, knew *whence* came the noble equanimity which set all the rest marvelling.

Out in the streets of the city the folk were elbowing and jostling by thousands, and the tall houses had every window lined, man and maid waiting, elbowing, craning to see "Him," as he went to his great ordeal. As for Amsdorf and myself, with a great effort we gained Dr. Luther enough peace for us to sit down beside him, spread the cloth, and force upon him the leg of a capon and a few tarts, that he might not go before the Diet absolutely faint and fasting. We had expected him to be summoned shortly after noon, but it was after four o'clock when Ulrich von Pappenheim, hereditary marshal of the Empire, and a file of twenty Swiss halberdiers in gorgeous scarlet surcoats, came to escort the distinguished friar before his judges. Dr. Luther needed no tarrying. Drawing his well-worn black habit about him, casting upon the table the papers he had been conning, he arose to go. I could see his lips were a little pale; possibly his steps were short and nervous, otherwise he was perfectly natural. Amsdorf and I each gave him a hand, and he returned the grasp warmly. We had long since passed the time when many words were needed. The halberdiers closed around him as if he were a prisoner. We followed at their heels, and so out into the street.

But despite the imperial banner boldly fluttered before us by Deutschland, despite sundry injunctions by the men-at-arms, and even thrustings with their pike staves, so dense was

the multitude that we won a tardy progress; until at last Pappenheim, loath to keep the Diet waiting, flung dignity to the winds, and turning us down a side alley brought us by back ways to the privy gate in the garden wall of the bishop's palace, and so at last into the vast rambling structure itself, and to the hall of audience.

Even within the palace every doorway, corridor, and over-looking gallery was packed. Spaniards, Italians, French, Flemings, all were there to stare at "*le grand heretique*," as many whispered in our hearing, though once or twice I caught a friendly word cast in some tongue quite other than German. I saw not a few serving men in the livery of the Forlis, and once I believed I caught the serpent-like eyes of Orosi peering out of a dark passageway, though of this I could not be certain. Onward we went, until our way was blocked by the guarded doors of the hall of the Diet; and while Pappenheim went before to announce our coming, and we stood waiting in tense expectancy, something occurred which heartened me at least not a little. For, from his post as guards-captain at the entrance, came Georg von Frundsberg, hardest-handed and most famous of the Kaiser's Lanzknecht generals, a man of more battles than he had surviving hairs, and he smote his great fist on Dr. Luther's shoulder, then spoke with the voice of a bull.

"Little monk, little monk, now go your way, to take a stand which neither I, nor any other commander in our sharpest battles, have taken; yet if you be of good intent, and certain of your business, go on in God's name and be comforted. Never will God forsake you!"

Ere my master could answer him, Pappenheim was whispering "Enter." We passed inside before the Diet.

* * * * *

Begging friar and peasant's son, no doubt, but judged by what a court! The room used for Luther's first hearing had

proved too small; the largest hall in the palace had been taken. Even this was packed to the great impairment of imperial dignity. From high windows the light of the afternoon sun was streaming in long golden panels over an august array of ducal caps and electoral "hats of presence." At one end of the hall, upon a purple-covered dais, and under a like colored canopy, sat a young man with pale and somewhat vacant countenance, clothed all in black save for a wide collar of white lace, while on his head perched a wide black hat. This was Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, King of Spain and of Naples, Archduke of Austria, Prince of the Netherlands, Dominator of the golden Indies of the Western Seas, — the greatest monarch since Charlemagne. At his left side, on a lower chair, was Prince Ferdinand, his brother, destined soon to share in many of his thrones. On his right side was a vacant seat, reserved for either one of the Monsignori, the two Papal Legates; but they both were absent, utterly outraged at the mere thought of seeming to parley with a convicted heretic. To right and to left, on close-set benches, the greater princes to the front, were the Electors, Landgrafs, and Dukes of the Empire, by the score; and among them sprinkled the lordly mitres of the prince-bishops whose temporal power made them mighty potentates.

As I ran my eye over the array one and another familiar face flashed before me: here was the handsome, sensual countenance of Albert of Mainz, the first patron of Tetzels; here was the hard and cynical face of his kinsman Joachim of Brandenburg, most venal and profligate of all the Electors; and on the rear benches was many a prince temporal or prince spiritual whom I knew wished Luther every ill. But I saw not enemies only. From the lords of Brunswick, Pomerania, Mecklenburg, Hesse, Lüneburg, there came friendly smiles; and on the Electors' bench, closest to the dais, sat the man whose rugged bearded countenance lit up as my master

entered — Frederick the Wise of Saxony, the prince of the pure heart, who had been Luther's best friend, despite the fact that these days in Worms were the only times he saw him.

Time would fail me to tell of the throng behind these princes. Counts and Freiherrns were there, and all the deputies of the imperial cities, all manner of captains, canons, doctors, and consequential burghers, ambassadors of France, England, Venice, noble foreigners and ignoble interlopers. It was hard for the Imperial ushers to keep a decent space cleared around the very throne of majesty. Glancing upward as I entered, I saw a lattice-work above the hall, and behind it were moving the garments, and at times flashing the eyes of women. Could I distinguish the face of Marianna? or the sombre robes of a nun? Conjectures were vain at that moment. Amsdorf and I stood with the other late comers near the doorway. The halberdiers opened their ranks, Pappenheim went forward, and following him moved the friar of Wittenberg — alone.

Standing on the first step of the dais, and facing the defendant, was a man of imposing presence, clad in black, Johann von Eck,¹ the "Official" of the Bishop of Worms and appointed as imperial interrogator in the hearings. Hardly had the first whisper and rustle caused by our coming passed, hardly had Luther ended his dutiful reverence before the throne, when I saw the pale young Kaiser nod to his spokesman. Silent enough was that hall when Eck began his questioning. Speaking first in Latin for the learned, then in German for the less lettered, he recapitulated what had befallen at the former audience: how Dr. Luther had been given ample time now for a final answer touching the charges against him. Every Christian should give a reason for his faith, much more a learned theologian like Luther; and now was the time for "the Herr Doctor to answer plainly whether he

¹ He was no connection of the Eck who had confronted Luther at Leipzig.

stood by the contents of his books, or whether he was ready to recant them."

You could have heard a hair fall in that assembly when Luther began his reply. Well though I knew him, I marvelled at his calmness. He answered as deliberately as when he spoke to his students in Wittenberg. His voice was clear, not shrill, and through it rang strength and sweetness. He looked from Emperor upon princes; from princes upon Emperor, as upon his peers, yet bravado was not in him. Ere he had spoken three sentences I said in my heart, and hundreds said with me, "It is well. God is with him. He will triumph."

A second time he bowed to the Emperor, then likewise to the closely packed Estates.

"Gracious Lord Emperor, and most serene Electors and Princes," I give his words as I recall them, "I crave your mercy if by my uncourtly speech I do offend. For I am peasant-born and peasant-bred, and untaught to stand before those whom God has set over the nations. Nevertheless, since this is a matter of conscience, and touches even the salvation of many souls, I will make bold to speak before you, and I know that in your benignity you will pardon my rude tongue."

So far the peasant's son to the Emperor, then he fixed his eyes right steadily on the Official.

"Worshipful Magister von Eck, you have asked me touching my books, and now I will make answer. In my day I have written many books (with a gesture to the volumes piled on a table below the dais), and much do they differ in kind. For the first kind, they are books of pure edification, nor has the bitterest foe found aught in them amiss. How therefore dare I condemn the good words which they contain by retracting them?"

("A skilful retreat," I heard a prince-bishop whisper; "he will save a part of his writings by sacrificing the rest.")

"Touching a second part, in them I have attacked that tyranny of the Pope beneath which all Germany groans. And what man not blinded by gold or the devil can deny that the whole land is most miserably ensnared and vexed by these doctrines of the Papalists, to the casting away of many souls. If therefore I should revoke these books, would I not but add force to the former tyranny, yea, open not merely the doors but the windows to destroying sin. In that case — holy God! what a cover to wickedness would I not become! How may I recant them?"

"This sounds little like retreating," a magnate under a ducal cap whispered back to the bishop, but Emperor, prince, and prelate, all kept silence while on spoke Luther.

"Finally, noble Sovereign and princes, I come to the third order of my books. In these I have assailed divers persons who have sprung to the defence of the Papal tyranny. Here I deny not I have perchance shown frailty. Doubtless I have sometimes written over-harshly of certain persons. A God I am not, but only a man, and prone to err, through lack of charity, ill becoming the name of Christ, which I do bear. Nevertheless I cannot retract even these books, lest in recalling the harsh words against the Papalists I seem to soften my attacks upon the tyranny and impiety itself, and thereby work greater harm than that which I would fain undo."

"He will not retract! The fiend curse him!" burst between the teeth of the aforementioned bishop, but I could see his ducal companion smiling broadly. The scene was desperately tense.

"Inasmuch, my Lord Emperor," the friar's voice still sounded, "as I am charged with direful heresies, my books burned in many cities, even my poor body threatened with the flames, I do remember in this hour the word of my Master, even Christ, when the Jews haled him before Annas, accusing

him falsely of many crimes, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.' For I am here not in my own pride, but in the name of God and His Gospel; and I do assure your Majesty and you noble lords that the moment I am proved to have written or said aught against the Holy Scriptures, in that same moment I am the first to cast my books upon the fire."

"Blasphemer," snarled the bishop. "Has not Rome spoken already against him? Wherefore does he prate thus of 'the Gospel'?"

"Because, Reverend Father," spoke back the Duke, "a few of us sinners are impiously preferring the Word of God to the word of Leo."

The hall was filled with murmurs now, even from the princes' benches. The keepers at the door pounded for silence with their pikestaves. Luther paused momentarily as they brought in tall red torches and set them in the sockets around the high chamber. Presently the Emperor nodded; and friar resumed.

"In days of old, and even in these present, it has been manifested that the word of God would most assuredly prevail, as I am well able to testify out of the Scripture; witness Pharaoh, the King of Babylon, and Kings of Israel who were smitten down in the plenitude of their power when they strove against the mandate of God. For it is He who taketh the wise in their own craftiness and overturneth even the mountains. Therefore it behooveth me to fear God. And this I say, not because my admonition is needful to such noble lords, but because the duty I owe to *my Germany* (ah! the ring of those words!) will not suffer me to recant. With this I do commend myself to your Majesty and to your Lordships, humbly asking that you will not suffer my accusers to triumph over me without fair cause. I have spoken."

By this time I think that every man within that close-

packed hall was in one of two camps — those who believed they gazed on a fiend, and those who believed they gazed on an angel. The black figure on the dais stirred nervously. The Electors were leaning forward, twisting their beards or knitting their fingers. It had grown dark suddenly, and the torches sent an unsteady glare over us all. The room was oppressively hot. Unpent emotions were venting themselves in smothered oaths or praises, Was the Diet confronting Anti-Christ or a new Apostle? Hardly a man but was ready with his certain answer, and ready to defend it even to the shedding of blood.

Von Eck stood by the dais in silence, evidently at a loss for a moment how to proceed. Then in a somewhat unsteady voice he directed Dr. Luther to repeat the substance of his words in German, for the sake of those who could not follow his Latin. This relieved the tense situation for a little. But I could see my master's forehead bathed with perspiration. He stood steadfast, his voice was as calmly strong as ever, but his face shone very wan under the hot torchlight. Willing indeed was his spirit, but the flesh was weak. For a moment fearing lest he was close to fainting, and himself sorely excited, the Saxon Councillor Von Thun cast etiquette to the winds, and called loudly across the press, "If you cannot go on, you have done enough, Herr Doctor."

But enough had not been done, either for foe or friend, and Luther knew it. Completing his repetition in German, at the mandate of the firmest will in the world his form seemed to straighten. Once more he confronted the Official, and Von Eck, mindful of his part, returned to the charge.

"You make many words, Herr Doctor, but your answers are not complete. Likewise you do grievously abuse the high clemency of his Majesty and the noble Estates in adding to your evil deeds these attacks upon the Lord Pope and his defenders. You are here to defend your books and teachings,

not to defame others. Again in your arguments you advance nothing new. Long debate there might be if any of your heresies were novel, but such they are not. Long since like heresies have been uttered by the 'Poor Men of Lyons,' by Wyclif of England, by John Hus of Bohemia. Nor need I tell you that these heresies were condemned at the great and ecumenical Council of Constance with the consent of entire Germany. How then do you set your judgment, confessedly prone to err, against the wisdom of that most holy Council?"

"Worshipful Magister von Eck," retorted Luther, with the least tinge of scorn in his voice, "I must answer you now as I have answered at Leipzig. General Councils can err. The Council of Constance erred. My conscience forbids me to retract."

None who knew Luther marvelled at these words, but this clear assertion of personal judgment over the authority of a universal Council, a Council to which most good Catholics ascribed a power even above a Pope's, this, I say, set many a prince and prelate writhing in his seat. Some even rose and cried out. There were mingled cheers and hisses. The great prelates were gnashing with their teeth, as the Jews over Stephen. Great beads of sweat stood on the friar's brow, but he held his ground, and faced unflinchingly the lowering Official and the frowning Emperor.

"Holy God, Martin," cried Von Eck, driven from his composure by the calm audacity of the reply, "do you assert that Councils can err, — can teach veritable heresy?"

"Even so," the answer was less yielding than ever; "not once but many times. I can prove it."

"Prove it? Impossible!"

"In nowise. I can quote many passages of Scripture. My conscience will not suffer me to go against them."

Von Eck smote his hands together in rising anger.

"Martin," he admonished, "let your conscience alone. Recant your errors, and you will be safe and sound. Never can you prove that Councils have erred."

My master shook his head in silent negative. The hall, unsupportably hot, was becoming noisy. High dignitaries were casting at Luther now encouragements, now execrations. The Emperor stirred uneasily, as if fain to bring the stormy audience to termination. For the last time the Official faced his stubborn witness. His voice was sharp with menace.

"Hearken then and make an end. His Imperial Majesty grows weary of your stubbornness. The question set has been plain. Yes? or no? Omit the classifications of your books, and the matter of Councils. The Emperor demands a clear answer without horns. Will you or will you not recant?"

Instantly the tumult was quieted. The great hall was absolutely still. Every man looked on Luther with bated breath, while he very deliberately squared himself before Von Eck. Then down the chamber bore his voice, not shrill, not shouting; simply deep with the depths of the mighty spirit within.

"Well, then, since your Serene Majesty and your Lordships ask for a plain answer, I will give it without horns or teeth, and here it is: Unless I am convinced by Scripture or by plain reason, seeing that Popes and Councils have often erred and contradicted, I cannot recant. I neither will nor can recant anything, because it is neither safe nor right to act against one's conscience. For my conscience is caught in the Word of God." Then he threw his arms wide, like some warrior grappling the innumerable foe. "HERE I STAND. I CAN DO NO OTHER. GOD HELP ME. AMEN!"

A great cry, hostile, friendly, broke from hundreds of throats. The Emperor rose from his seat, and vanished

by a rear entrance without a word, while around Luther swirled a multitude that almost bore him from his feet.

I elbowed my way to my master. Many friends were there before me, for a score of high nobles and deputies of the towns had ringed him around. They were pressing his hand, stamping, laughing, shouting, even trying to kiss him. Good Elector Frederick did not tarry, but as I passed him I heard him saying to the Duke of Pomerania, "Ah! how well Dr. Luther spoke this day. Never now will I believe him a heretic."

At last the whole mass of us had my master out the door. As we went, we saw the Italian and Spanish soldiers and prelates crowding around, moving their dark lips, flashing malignity from their eyes, and crying in their own tongues, "To the fire! To the fire! Burn the heretic!" But the German nobles closed about him as a guard of honor, and their swords flashed out and tossed wildly in the darkened streets. Just as we reached the portal, and the cold air smote us, Luther threw his hands high above his head, as would a ritter returning victorious from the lists.

"I am through!" he cried, with feverish laughter, "I am through! *I am through!*"

So back to the house of the Knights of St. John. Outside in the streets we heard a true whirlwind raging; a course of all the wild spirits in Worms was loose, drinking deep, shouting loud, clashing its swords and bawling its "*vivats!*" for the peasant's son who had made even Emperor and Electors hear the cry of the Fatherland against the tyrant of Italy. At our quarters there were other tokens of the general favor, heartening messages from princes, city deputies, and even high ecclesiastics, and Duke Erik of Brunswick sent Luther a true German present, a mighty can of Einbecker beer from his own table. Spalatin, Elector Frederick's confessor, was there, with cheering words from

his sovereign, and a host of humbler friends who had not been able to enter the hall, but who now caught as it were for the hem of their leader's garment.

Dr. Luther cast himself upon the bench and sat for long in silence. He was terribly pale. His forehead was bathed with sweat. At times he would tremble all over. But his eyes shone with a light almost supernatural. He was very happy.

* * * * *

Years have passed over me since that afternoon in Worms. What I thought then, is my thought even to this day, — that since the hour when Jesus Christ cried, "It is finished," on the Cross, and by His sacrifice redeemed this world, mankind have seen few or no hours greater, more potent for the far hereafter, than that scene in the hall before princes and Emperor.

He had done it. He, the peasant's son, the begging friar. Against him had been Roman Law and Canon Law, the authority of Councils, the mandate of Popes, the tradition of the Church, the frowns of prince prelates and Kaiser, the manifest warnings of a fiery death. He had carried to the ordeal only the good wishes of those who trusted him, and his own clear conscience. He had braved everything, Church, and State, and physical terrors, and threatenings of hell. Where others, the wisest and noblest, would have recanted, he had refused. Where the bravest might have quailed, he had stood steadfast. He had been true to himself, despite the scorn and thunder and fury of nigh all the great ones of the world.

And I think it of little account whether in days to come men shall say Martin Luther did well or ill in his exact doctrines, of "Grace," or "Faith," or "Redemption." Doctrines change, the shifting prism of truth can find new colors, but the right of a man to stand before his God and to

avow, "This I hold to be Truth, for with the powers Thou hast given, I see it so," such a right, I say, is what Luther defended at Worms. And till mornings and evenings cease, and summer be confounded with winter, shall the fruits of this victory abide; priest, and dogma, and human tradition and human law shall no more stand betwixt the vision of Truth and him who shall seek it reverently.

CHAPTER XXX

THE HAND OF FORLI

It is told in the Gospels how Our Lord and His disciples ascended upon the Mount of Transfiguration, where were scenes passing the imaginings of man, even the apparition of Moses and Elias out of Paradise. Then after the cloud, the divine voice and the glory, they must needs go down from the mountain, and lo ! the world was not changed, men were still eating, sorrowing, blundering as of old, and the father of the demoniac boy was waiting to tell of his miserable burden. So in small measure it was even with us after that afternoon in Worms. The next morning we looked forth, expecting, as it were, to behold a new heaven and a new earth, but half to our astonishment we were in the former bustling, tale-mongering, intriguing city, the Spanish courtiers were idling near the palace gate, the Swiss halberdmen were over their beer in the taverns even as before. We were in the same imperfect world as ever, and if the vision of glory did not vanish from memory, surely the brightness of its reality was a little tarnished.

I awoke late, and rubbed an aching head. I could at least comfort myself that I was not paying the price of a carouse. Amsdorf was silent and moody when we breakfasted, Andrea, who served us, was heavy-eyed; even Dr. Luther (who joined us when we were nearly finished) had little to say, although he professed to have slept tolerably. Our remarks were very commonplace. Later in the morning I wrote a long letter to my deputy at the Regenstein, touching the

new road I was causing to be built around my snug dominions, and idled away an hour with an armorer who tried to sell me a new fowling cross-bow. Even the report that there was another meeting of the Diet called for that same day to deliberate on Dr. Luther's answer did not rouse my interest. My master had spoken his word, and I knew that he had enshrined himself forever in the hearts of Germany. What the Diet, dominated by a half-Flemish, half-Spanish Emperor, and a great coterie of horrified prince-bishops might resolve, did not for the moment greatly matter. If it voted Luther a heretic, the German nation would thunder back the answer. As I sat toying with the new cross-bow, I caught myself levelling it nonchalantly at imaginary Spanish pikemen, who were striving to storm Wittenberg, and my mind revelled in vast imaginary slaughter.

But about noon I had a visitor who shook me quickly enough out of my lethargy, — Moritz von Blakenburg. The sight of that honest, heavy-handed, hard-working young nobleman was ever welcome to me, let alone his kinship to my Lady Ilsa. He had been one of the spectators in the great hall of audience, had seen me in Luther's company, and had found our lodgings without trouble. Our first words were naturally full of enthusiasm over the words and deeds of my master.

"Ah! Walter," spoke he, while his hand closed over mine, "the black crows shall not have Germany in their talons again till every graf and ritter in the North Country is in a bloody grave. I know my people. We do not have the million words and gestures of those apes of the South, but our arms are strong; I know all I say. I am going back to Blankenburg to make ready my lands and castle for the war. In a month it will be on us."

But by this time my belligerent day-dreams had been chased away, and I shook my head.

"Nobly said, Moritz, and nobly done too if needs be. But it will not come to that, God willing. We must bethink us; you, I, every friend of Dr. Luther, for a way to save him, yet keep the peace. The Cause must prevail, and shall, against all fiends, but not by culverins and pole-axes save as last resort. Give us a little respite, a few months even, and all will be well."

Von Blankenburg laughed derisively. "You have not been to the Diet this morning. The Emperor has caused a solemn statement to be read setting forth that he and his Imperial ancestors have been loyal sons of the Church and foes of heresy, that Luther has been clearly proved obstinate in his errors and worthy of all punishment as a 'true and evident heretic,' and the Estates are admonished to give their judgment as to how to deal with him. The Papal Legates are beside themselves with glee, the prince-bishops are snarling for blood like jackals. Elector Frederick and the other friends of the friar sit moody and without a word. Are we then to say 'peace, peace,' while Luther is banned and burned?"

I checked his vehemence with a restraining hand. "You ask a very witless question, Moritz. But hear my answer. That Luther should be banned at the behest of the Emperor and bishops astonishes me not at all, but burning is a different matter. He will in any case be suffered to return to Wittenberg, unless Charles violate the safe-conduct and enkindle the fury of Germany. And once out of Worms, few will make haste to burn him. Do you know what will happen?"

"What?"

"I have been watching the foreign clouds, and hearing all the rumors. Francis of France is about to seize our fine Kaiser by the throat. There is a great war impending. One month, two, three, four, how many I know not, but it will

not be for very long. Once set the armies of His Imperial Majesty and of the Most Christian King to marching, and it will be a long day before the Emperor has much time or hankering to embroil himself with his German subjects whose spears and taxes will be very useful. If now Dr. Luther might be hidden away, might vanish like a bird, captured not by his foes, but by his friends, and remain hidden and safe for a little season, all will be well. Germany will find herself. The Cause will be too firmly rooted to be shaken, though all the winds of hell blow against it. When peace with France comes, Pope and Emperor will find the task too great for them."

Moritz stroked his blond mustache reflectively. "I would be glad to see Luther in such an owl's nest. There is one place possible, if the Saxon court will suffer it ;—the Wartburg."

"The great castle of Thuringia? Nothing safer. But who is its governor?"

"My own uncle, Von Steinitz ; transferred from Wittenberg. Have you not heard it?"

"Better friend to Luther does not breathe. What if the thing could be managed! But, praise heaven, we have a respite, and my wits are too dull to-day to outwit a sheep, much less the Monsignori. Let us talk of other things."

Then I asked him about his journey to Worms, and the welfare of his aunt and sister, whereat his brow clouded, but he told me readily. The abbess had need to visit Worms on the business of her order, some appeal to the Pope's Legates as to a new "tenth" laid by the Vatican upon the Abbey lands. She had, he thought, taken Ilsa with her as travelling companion more because she distrusted leaving the young nun alone at Quedlinburg, than because she found her company congenial. She could not well refuse Moritz's proffered escort, because it was notorious that the

roads were infested by "free ritters," to whom an abbess was no more sacred than a fat burgomaster; but all the way she had taken pains that Moritz and Ilsa should speak together as little as possible.

As for the abbess's opinion of Luther, it had been one of uncompromising hostility. On the afternoon of the great ordeal she, with Ilsa and many other ladies, had listened to the great heretic through a grille above the hall. She had professed loud expectations that at the last "his father the devil" would forsake the friar, and leave him recanting and confounded. After the audience Moritz had seen his aunt and sister, and in the enthusiasm of the moment had heaped all manner of praise on Luther. His words had been flint against the abbess's steel. A bitter dialogue had followed. Ilsa had taken sides warmly with her brother and incidentally with the heretic. Her aunt had turned on her in fury, had charged her with violating her sacred vows, "in hope, and thought, and everything but deed," and finally had forbidden her "on her obedience as a nun," to speak again to her "blasphemous and heretical brother." The scene had ended with the abbess suddenly quitting the inn where the party had lodged, and seeking apartments at the castle. And as for Moritz, he, poor fellow, could only "bite his thumbs and look sour while his sister was led away." The abbess, he hoped, would presently relent, "but sometimes he thought it more profitable to beseech a stone horse-post than his holy Aunt Theckla."

"Moritz," said I, directly, "is your sister Ilsa happy?"

"Happy?" he reëchoed, "I think she is one of the most miserable creatures in all the world."

"Moritz," I continued, "you believe in God. You believe that He is kindly, compassionate, forgiving; that if He is merciful to our sins, He is still more merciful to our blunders. Do you think it for His honor and glory, and do you think

He is well pleased that when one of His children has taken upon herself vows for a life for which she is all unfitted, a life which makes herself and one she truly loves miserable beyond words, that those vows should be kept forever?"

He looked at me distractedly an instant, then his eyes opened in a mingled wonder and dread. "Holy Christ!" he swore, "you do not mean —"

With him I knew there was no way better than perfect frankness. "I mean full soon to ride into the Regenstein with your sister my true and honored wife."

He was somewhat slow of thought; at last he spoke, though all over he was a-tremble.

"Yesterday at this hour I would have vowed 'impossible.' To-day, after hearing Dr. Luther's great words, after feeling that the old priests' faith was dying, that the better men's faith was at hand — what shall I say? She is my sister. Who shall guard her honor save I? —" A long pause, and then, "You shall have her, Walter, if but Dr. Luther bless your wedding; and then God keep and bless us all!"

We pressed hands silently. A little later Andrea came to say that a strange man in burgher's dress demanded to see me, and I went to the outer chamber.

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It all befell very simply. I had gone to my fate as blindly as an ox to the slaughter. A decently dressed fellow of few words had asked me to visit a certain obscure inn situate near the Rhine gate, "Where he believed he could reveal to me a conspiracy against Dr. Luther." I had followed him unhesitatingly, without even a word of explanation to Moritz. My informant declared I must come alone, or the plotters would grow suspicious. Possessed by the single thought that my master might be in some new danger, I had gone out into the street with barely the word to Andrea "To watch Dr. Luther like gold till I returned." As for myself, I had not

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the least anxiety in the world. Was I not surely as safe as the hundred other German nobles attending the Diet? I had followed my conductor through circuitous and noisome alleys, until we passed into a narrow court before a tall, but very decrepit ancient mansion. Throwing open the narrow battered door the fellow motioned me to enter.

"This is a strange place to bring me," I remarked with a shrug, for the first time debating the good faith of his errand.

"Your Lordship will discover in a moment the object of bringing you hither," came the complacent answer. "You will have opportunity to hear the converse of some of Luther's most malignant enemies."

"After all," I reflected, "conspirators must choose uncanny holes!" And so I stepped inside. The instant I had done so, however, I turned on my conductor sharply. "Fellow, you declared you would bring me to an inn. This silent house is no more an inn than it is a cathedral."

Before I could receive his answer, I was startled by the rush of feet down the dark passage. At least four men were on me, and the door was instantly closed behind, cutting off nearly all the light. I struggled desperately to draw my walking rapier, but the odds were too great. In a moment I was on my back, with some sort of a shawl closely pressed over my head, stifling my outcries.

"Lie quiet, Excellency," spoke a guttural voice which I recognized as possibly Hans Lange's, "we are rough valets, but your life is in no danger if you but submit quietly."

Having exerted myself to the very limit of my powers, I was fain to yield, being in fact too bruised and out-of-breath to think connectedly, and presently I was rudely hoisted to my feet with a muffler tied across my mouth, a dark handkerchief across my eyes, and my arms pinioned together not very gently. In this condition I was perforce led some distance through what I conceived to be, by the smell, musty

apartments, and then again out into the open air; next I was thrust, or rather cast, upon the straw of what seemed a wagon. My captors beyond a doubt had been entirely prepared to deal with me, for the instant I was in the vehicle I felt them all clambering in beside me, and the former speaker ordered huskily "To close the wagon cover, and drive away."

I heard the cracking of a whip, and in a moment we were off, bumping and rattling over the merciless cobbles of the city streets until every bone of my body, already sorely bruised, ached as if on the rack. Speech was forbidden to me, and my custodians said little, save that one cursed at times "that I had nigh bitten off his ear whilst we struggled on the floor." Presently we were beyond the paved streets, and to my great relief upon some kind of a more level earthen road. Forcing myself to collect my wandering wits I tried to note the turns the wagon might take, and to compute the lapse of time consumed in the driving; but any guesses were obviously futile. I could only imagine I was being conveyed to some prison at a distance from the city walls. I was too conscious of much physical pain to reason connectedly; I could only console myself that at least my kidnappers were not assassins, until a "*Jesu-Maria!*" from one of the men about me taught half the story instantly.

"Ah! Eminenza di Forli," spoke I in my heart, "it is to you that I owe this fair hospitality: you are about to repeat with greater address those worthy deeds you attempted at Palaestro! But we shall discover."

In fact, my spirits rose a little. After all, in dealing with Forli I was dealing with a man whose means and mental processes I thoroughly understood, and was not that half the battle?

Presently the wagon rattled over a drawbridge, and halted for a murmured conversation, possibly with a sentinel on

duty; we soon drove on, up a considerable incline, as if into a castle courtyard, and the hoofs clicked on more cobbles; next I was seized like a log, stood on my feet, and hurried down a flagged passage and up two long stairways. I heard a rattling of bolts; a door creaked open; I was thrust inside. Then the mufflers were withdrawn from my eyes and mouth; the pinions from my arms. Before me stood two low-browed loutish men with great rings of keys at their waists, evidently regular jailors, and by no means my late captors and companions. I eyed them severely.

"Well, my merry masters," said I, glad to find my tongue, "will you deign to inform me why I am so suddenly summoned to partake of your kind hospitality?"

"Your worship will know presently," remarked one, with a very sullen reverence.

"I am glad to see that you have the grace to bow to your betters. You would do still more wisely to consider whether it is safe for you to hold a free Count of the Empire in this most unlawful custody. Because I do not rave and curse do not think I am insensible to my treatment."

"We have high warrant. Your worship will be told presently," was all I could get out of him, and then perhaps fearing to have me question further, they turned suddenly and quitted the cell, leaving me to my thoughts and to cultivate the captive's slow virtue of patience.

A cell the place surely was, although not quite a dungeon. I had soon paced off its nine feet by eight. The walls were roughly smoothed limestone. A single small and heavily barred window close to the ceiling showed nothing but a blank bare wall of masonry. There was a hard pallet with a rough blanket, a hay-stuffed sack for a pillow, a three-legged stool, an earthen cruse of water. On the walls were scribblings and rude pictures, the handiwork of former prisoners, but I could not interpret them then. That was all. My

explorations were soon finished. Seating myself on the edge of the pallet I began to take account of my own physical state. Fortunately I was really none the worse save for a few scratches and bruises, although my arms were very sore where the cords had chafed. My clothing had been rent to shreds in the struggle. The kidnappers had appropriated my purse and gold chain, and of course my sword. I washed myself with the water in the cruse, drank a little, and felt somewhat refreshed, but my mental condition was none the happiest. This was a far more serious bondage than that from which Andrea had nimbly extricated me at Palaestro. In addition to wrath at the actual outrage came wrath at my own simplicity. How utterly I had played the fool! Had asked almost no questions, had taken no precautions, had informed no friends. Bewitched by the magic words "A plot against Luther," I had walked into a trap a simpleton would have scorned. Verily I deserved every misery that might be awaiting!

Thus raced my first thoughts, but after these came others more bitter. Why had I been singled out for this treatment, even by an unmoral being like Forli? The answer came quickly enough; because in removing me, there was removed one of the chiefest guardians of Luther. My kidnapping was the prelude to a fouler plot to break the safe-conduct and to work some mortal harm upon the great foe of the Vatican. So after the moments of wrath came the moments of rage, when with none to witness me I cursed, swore oaths fit, I fear, for a lanz-knecht, bade God smite me dead, mew me up in prison forever, tear me limb from limb on the rack, if only my master might be saved, and the Cause move on to its eternal triumph.

At length the passion died. Heavy-hearted, weary in mind and body, sorely perplexed, I sat down again on the bed. I realized now that I was hungry, nor was I sorry when

one of the scurvy jailors opened to pass me in a small loaf and a wooden platter of ill-cooked peas and lentils. I ate them greedily, and was again sitting idly, musing on the sore perplexity my disappearance would cause to Dr. Luther, when again the bolts rattled. I saw the jailors scraping in abject servility before a personage in a bright red cloak. It was the Cardinale di Forli. . . . His smile was as gracious as of old, when we met casually on the Corso. His features had possibly coarsened a trifle in the past few years, and he had grown more portly, otherwise I could not detect the slightest change. There was a tinge of delicate perfume about him. His rings and the linen at his neck and wrists were exquisite. I rose and bowed with some stiffness, both mental and physical. At sight of my tattered clothes he raised his hands deprecatingly.

"Alas ! my poor Gualtiero. What disarray you have caused yourself by your ill-timed resistance. I charged my worthy servitors to conduct you here as gently as possible."

"Then I owe to you, Eminenza, the vast courtesy of this encounter, this ride and these present hardly sumptuous quarters."

"It will be your own fault, my dear fellow," he rejoined "if you do not speedily exchange them for better. As for your clothes, that matter shall be remedied immediately."

"I have more serious affairs upon my mind than the state of my doublet," I returned coldly.

"I am delighted," he observed, ignoring my remark, "that you retain your use of the Italian tongue so perfectly. I feared your accent had been ruined by these years of hearing only barbarous German gutturals."

"Why your particular satisfaction, Eminenza?"

"Because you are so shortly to return to Italy as a country of permanent sojourn; in short, to resume your rightful estate, character, and life as the Conte di Palaestro."

"Whether Palaestro or Regenstein is to be my name," I cast back, paling possibly at the implied threat, "I trust Monsignore il Cardinale will be gracious enough to let me choose for myself."

Hè moved his fat hands deprecatingly, and fingered the rare cameo dangling at his neck.

"You drive me to very blunt speech, Gualtiero ; but allow me to state our intentions as delicately as possible. You will doubtless recall the advice of the famous physicians of antiquity — simply to name Hippocrates and Galen, — who urge the wise professor of the art of Æsculapius not to refrain from some necessary surgery or caustic, however sharp, notwithstanding that the sick man cries out vehemently against the inevitable pain. So we, physicians for your highest weal and happiness, cannot be deterred from our wholesome ministrations by any forms of protest, which you, *carissimo*, may feel in duty bound to utter."

"I correctly apprehend your meaning," I returned, "yet you will pardon my impoliteness if I fail to display true gratitude. However, you will suffer me to observe that this is Germany, not Italy, this is Worms, not Rome. It may prove an awkward, nay an highly embarrassing thing for even the Cardinal Legate of the Pope to have been the promoter of the lawless kidnapping of a free Count of the Empire. You fail in your customary shrewdness if you imagine such a proceeding will advance the prestige and favor of His Holiness in Germany. If I live, I will seek ample redress for your deeds this day. If you murder me, I can at least promise sufficient vengeance."

"You speak as lustily as a Neapolitan bravo, my dear fellow," spoke Forli, showing his teeth most unpleasantly. "I assure you your firm front, in what is confessedly a painful predicament, does you infinite credit. I will not fail to repeat it all to the admiration of Marianna. However, to return

to the present discussion ; you will perhaps modify your judgment of me when I show you this."

He drew from his sleeve a small paper. As he unrolled it, my eyes caught the red seal with the Hapsburg double eagle. He passed it to me, and I read in French.

"For high reasons of Church and State, his Eminence, the Cardinale di Forli, is permitted to seize the person of Walter, Graf von Regenstein, otherwise called the Conte di Palaestro, and to keep the said Walter in such custody as he may see fit.

"Such is our Imperial pleasure.

"Carolus Imperator."

There seemed nothing to say. I simply bowed and returned the writing to Forli, who waited considerably for the first shock of my discomfiture to pass.

"You see we were driven to these measures, Gualtiero," he said at length, replacing the paper. "Your attitude towards Marianna was so absolutely unconciliatory. Santo Spirito ! The poor girl was completely prostrated when I found her soon after you left her. Fortunately His Majesty was moved to do me a service, but out of consideration to yourself, no less than with a view to the disturbance your public arrest might create, I caused you to be taken most privately. Marianna has begged that you be humiliated as little as possible."

"Cardinale di Forli," I broke in, "grant me no favors, save as you would grant them to your mortal enemy. I will not waste tongue and breath on oaths, swearing that I will neither go to Italy nor stay in Italy save as a close prisoner. You think you know me, and of a surety I know you. Therefore our relations are simpler. Yet answer if you will one thing — am I here because Marianna will not see me escape her meshes, or because I have befriended Luther ? Why should the Emperor order my arrest, even at the bidding of a Papal Legate ?"

I could see Forli was not glad to have me press the question. His eyes moved shiftily.

"I cannot answer you now, Gualtiero. Perhaps there was a mixture of motive. You shall see what you shall see."

"I thank you, Eminenza," said I, with a sarcastic shrug, "for your enlightening answer."

Evidently he saw our conversation was leading nowhere, and he moved backward to the door, nor did I make effort to detain him.

"Addio," spoke he, going out, "till to-morrow. I will report your gracious speeches to Marianna."

The waiting jailor flung open for him, the door closed behind him, and the bolts rattled back. The room was already darkening with the advancing twilight. I was alone with the four gray walls and my hard pallet. Long, long I sat with my head on my hands, trying to solve the riddle of Forli's schemes and of my own fate. That the Cardinal and Marianna should seek my mischief was likely enough; but why the Emperor, who might strike more open blows, should condescend to this dagger-thrust, was beyond my guessing. Surely, Charles had hitherto seemed an honorable foe,—a lion, not a jackal.

I was weary in mind and body. My brain refused to work clearly. The prison around me was still,—terribly still. My absolute loneliness added to the fearfulness of my predicament. I would have been glad of some veritable idiot with whom I might go through the form of taking counsel. The black wall before me was not more unscrutable than my future. Only two things could I forsee clearly. Luther was about to confront some terrible and unexpected danger, and I was removed, partly lest I prevent that danger. Again, the Cause was like to perish, and with the Cause went every hope I had so loftily vaunted to Moritz touching Ilsa. She would die a Quedlinburg nun! And I—was I to be held in

Italy like a dumb sheep, till I consented again to lead the old heathen life as the lover of Marianna? But here my manhood uprose in hot revolt. I was in prison, but I had still hands, heart, head, and wits. Luther was in danger, but he was not yet dead. The Cause in peril, but not yet ruined. Wherefore had men praised my learning, physical address, prudence, and worldly wisdom if I could not use them for mighty ends? The crisis was on me. By some power I knew not, and by some voice I heard not, it was borne home to me that in the next few days would come the test of my entire life; that I was to be put in heaven's crucible and tried, to see how much was dross, how much was gold; that I must calm myself; must speak no word lightly; do no deed rashly; and be ready for whatsoever sacrifice high Duty might demand. Then, and then only, come what might, I would redeem my soul. And whether after that I lived or died would matter very little.

Remembering the example both of my master in Worms and my other Master in heaven, I cast myself beside the bed and prayed earnestly and long.

"Lord," I concluded, "human help is failing me. Human philosophies and wisdom profit me nothing. Send down from Heaven Thy strength that I may save Dr. Luther and the Cause. May I be true to myself, and to the trust which Ilsa has set in me. Grant only that — then do with me as Thou wilt."

When I rose to my knees a panel of moonlight from the tiny window threw itself across the flagged floor of the cell.

"A fair omen!" I thought. Nor was I troubled because the conceit seemed pagan.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE OFFER OF CÆSAR

I SLEPT with tolerable soundness, but awoke with a start very early, just when a bar of gray light was thrusting in at my little window and making the blackness of the cell barely visible. Outside my door some turnkey went past with his heavy keys jangling. The events of the past day and my present helpless predicament all surged back to me in a flash. The pallet had been very hard. My ribs ached, and I felt little refreshed by my slumber. Nevertheless, in the darkness I was fain to lie meditating on all things unpleasant until the gloom had changed to twilight, the twilight to clear daylight. Then I perceived that while I slept my tattered doublet and cloak had been removed, and replaced by others of elegant material and tailoring, suitable for the walking dress of a nobleman; and there was even a sword laid upon them, although it was a poor mean thing for a weapon, with a rare chased hilt, but a blade not fit to slay a toad. In short, I was led to augur that the present phase of my captivity was not likely to continue very long.

This impression was heightened by the demeanor of the jailor, who soon entered with my breakfast. He was brusque enough, answering my questions with nods and monosyllables; but the food he brought was far superior to the prison fare of the past day, and I was glad to eat heartily. On putting on my new clothes, I observed that their whole cut and fashion was Italian, and that everything about my apparel suggestive of Germany had been carefully removed from the

cell. My curiosity was thus distinctly heightened, but I was fain to nurse it in solitary patience through a good interval of the morning, till at last I heard a distinct trumpeting, as if without the fortress, and a clangor of arms, and shouting of officers "to turn out their men." This was followed by a thundering salute from several culverins, and more confused shouting. It required little discernment on my part to conclude that a princely personage had been entering the castle, and I conjectured (it soon appeared rightly) that I was confined in one of the half fortresses, half summer-houses on the Rhine, possessed by the Bishop of Worms and now at the temporary disposal of the Emperor. The tumult and uproar died presently, and I was becoming sufficiently impatient and moody, when the cell was again opened, and my jailor beckoned me forth with more civility than on former visits.

"Will my gracious Lord follow me?" and I was fain to trudge at his heels down a number of bat-dark corridors and vaulted passages, until at last we passed a doorway guarded by a mustachioed Spanish pikeman, when presto! I was in another world! Rich carpets were under our feet. The walls were hung with intricate tapestries; I caught the sniff of spring flowers from some garden. Wide windows, flung clear open, let in the ample April sunlight and the balmy breeze that blew across the Rhine. The turnkey led me up to a smooth-faced valet in brown livery, saluted, turned on his heel, and was gone to his own part of the castle, leaving me to follow my new guide, who with a bow and flourish worthy of a Parisian led me through several chambers, only to halt finally at another door and announce in sonorous Italian, "His Excellency the Conte di Palaestro."

"Let him enter," returned a voice which I at once recognized as Forli's, and I was instantly in the presence of the Cardinal.

The prelate rose with his most condescending smile to greet me, would not let me kiss his hand, and insisted that I sit beside him upon the broad couch by the windows. Below us in admirable vista spread the muddy Rhine and the green Palatinate country to eastward. The manner of Forli was more than bland. A stranger would have believed this the meeting of an affectionate uncle and a highly dutiful nephew, a picture truly edifying and touching.

Forli surveyed me carefully, noting with approval the fit of my clothes and my general carriage.

"Admirably done. This Tuscan broadcloth makes another man of you. Marianna was very sure the dark blue would become you rarely, and she was right. What taste the girl has! She could qualify as a feminine Petronius, the Arbiter Elegantie of the court of Nero. You recall the allusion, of course?"

"Most decidedly. You are extremely apt. Marianna is all you say," I rejoined in a tone that might have carried a trifle of sarcasm.

"I knew you would applaud her choice. Poor maid, she has found your attitude so unflinching! but after all I said to her, 'Remember Gualtiero is half a German, and the evil blood is bound to show itself at times; besides the poor fellow is bewitched. We will dispose of the wizard, and remove his victim to Italy. Then your heart will very promptly be mended.'"

I felt the muscles of my forehead begin to twitch, but I am sure Forli saw nothing.

"Well, Eminenza," spoke I, "I am too long honored by your close acquaintance not to feel myself a lamb before a leopard in dealing with your high decisions concerning me; yet even apart from the wisdom of your course, even apart from the question whether Luther be wizard or apostle, you must at least remember I call myself a cavaliere, a man of

honor; and my honor is sorely touched by having been thus seized for bearing like a caged starling from Worms to Rome. I do your Eminence only justice when I say that either I must be fairly convinced my return to Italy is not against my honor, or I will make every effort to escape from your custody, however honorable."

Forli eyed me very shrewdly; his smile was benignant, but altogether inscrutable.

"To Italy you shall go, Gualtiero," said he, at length, "will-you, nill-you; but I think you will not find it contrary to your honor."

"Your Eminence may well summon up all your justly famous eloquence to convince me; all your orators' precepts from Quintilian and Tacitus. I have been with Martin Luther now these two and more years. I have heard all the arguments which Rome can bring against him. I have weighed carefully the possible cost of supporting his cause. I will not anger your Eminence by words in his behalf which you will call weak sentiment and bathos; but far as the eastern and western seas our minds now stand asunder. You will never win me."

"I shall not try," and still he smiled on.

"I fear I divine your meaning," I rejoined; "you believe Madonna Marianna will prove the more eloquent orator. Great are her gifts; but they are not for me. Spare us both another painful scene. She likewise will prove powerless."

"Our advocate will not be Marianna," said Forli, with that smile which only deepened.

"Who, then, Eminenza?"

"Charles the Fifth — Holy Roman Emperor."

And then I was shaken for a truth, and the cardinal grinned aimiably at my surprise. "*Per deos immortales*, Gualtiero, you need not be amazed! You have really become quite a man in the world. At every court men are guessing at

your motives. At Rome they say it is because you did not get the red hat. Let that pass. Certain it is, all our Vatican party are saying 'it is your Palaestro who has swept the Elector of Saxony and so many North German princes and Free Cities into the Lutheran net. *He* it is who has made it so difficult to burn *il heretico* without convulsing all Germany.' It was partly on your account I quitted Paris so suddenly and came to Worms. Do not then wonder that His Majesty knows all about you, and sends for you."

"But by every power, Eminenza," cried I, aroused, indeed, "for what purpose does the Emperor send for me, unless indeed I be such a dangerous public firebrand I must be forever smothered in a dungeon."

"Hardly that; you shall discover directly. You are to have immediate audience."

"With the Emperor?"

"Even so. Doubtless you heard the cannon booming when he came out from Worms."

He paused to help himself to some strong waters from a silver decanter. I was glad of the respite. More clearly than ever I knew I was facing some mortal crisis. I bowed my head as if resting, but it was to seek also a strength beyond strength of man. Hardly had Forli refreshed himself when a Spanish gentleman, immaculately clad from cap to heels in gray, bowed himself into the room.

"I have the honor to transmit the Emperor's commands," spoke he in French, but accompanying with a profound Castilian reverence, "that the Conte di Palaestro wait on him immediately."

Forli rose, waving me a kind of god-speed with his hand.

"Be sensible, Gualtieri," he enjoined; "do not be swayed by silly sentiment. I will have Marianna meet you when you quit His Majesty."

* * * * *

I was in the presence of the man who had it in his certain power to order my execution, to fling me into unending prison, to consign me to exile: Charles of Hapsburg. I had seen him at the Diet, but only from a distance, and my thoughts had all been for Luther. Now we were face to face.

He was seated at a low desk covered with papers, in a small room conspicuous by its plainness. A gorgeously dressed courtier kept the door; a sprucely dressed secretary stood at his elbow to supply any documents needed out of several capacious leathern portfolios, but the Emperor was dressed in dead black, with almost monkish simplicity. From the heavy golden chain at his neck, as sole ornament dangled a copper medal of some patron saint. When I was announced, he glanced up, nodded a very brief recognition, then went on writing. I was able to survey his person at leisure. Here was a young man just of age, of middle stature, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, with a high, intellectual forehead. His nose was decidedly aquiline. The whole aspect of his countenance was pale, grave, melancholy, yet withal commanding. The eyes were blue and keen, the hair blond, almost reddish. I instantly recognized the projecting lower jaw, with its thick heavy lip, the true family mark of the princely Hapsburgs. The lower part of his face was veiled by a very thin beard. Barring the light hair there was nothing German about him. "A Spaniard at his heart," thought I, and I believe history will testify I was right.

He continued writing until I had become tense and uneasy with the waiting; then I saw him fold the paper with his own hands and give it to the waiting secretary. Very deliberately then he pushed back his leaden inkstand and fastened his eyes on me. His gaze was deep, inscrutable; it was impossible to call it either hostile or friendly.

"The Conte di Palaestro?" asked he in Italian. I bowed.

"Do you speak French?" he continued in that tongue. "I prefer it."

"I am fortunate, your Majesty, in having passing command of the language."

"Good, then. We may converse."

"I attend the Emperor's pleasure."

He did not reply immediately, but continued his cold, passionless scrutiny. The interval was not agreeable, but I strove to endure with composure. At last he spoke again in a slow, monotonous tone; all intellect, but no fire.

"You have made no small name for yourself, Conte di Palaestro, or Graf von Regenstein — whichever title you prefer. It is thanks partly to you that so many princes refuse to set their names to a decree of the Diet condemning Luther. It was a heavy thing for a nobleman of your youth, and of an honorable yet hardly princely rank, to attempt what you have done. This Luther is causing me and my councillors many anxious hours."

"Your Majesty overpraises my influence," I replied, "the princes of Germany are their own masters. In arguing the cause of Luther I have but argued as one of your loyal subjects. The arousing wrath of your people of every sort and condition against the evil deeds of the Papalists has done the rest."

"I have not summoned you to hear one more defence of Luther."

"I am most humbly waiting your gracious pleasure, Sire," spoke I, at once anxious and curious.

He beckoned to the secretary, and whispered a request. Forth from one of the portfolios came a document covered with writing. Charles spread it on the desk.

"Here, Conte di Palaestro, is all I can learn about you. My agents at the different princely courts of Germany and Italy have compiled it. Your ancestry, estates, education,

prospects, habits, friendships, in short everything relating to you and your life are herein set forth. Can you imagine wherefore I have singled you out, amid all my innumerable cares, for this intense curiosity?"

"I cannot divine, your Majesty."

Charles gave a single wave of his hand. Instantly the secretary and attendant courtiers moved toward the door. I was about to follow when he checked me by a glance of the eye. We were quite alone ere he spoke again. Then he resumed in the former slow, passionless voice.

"Conte di Palaestro, this Luther you have seen fit to befriend has caused me sore disquietude. And wherefore? Not because he is not a heretic. The Church has spoken against him. That for me is enough." He crossed himself with deliberate piety. "We Hapsburgs are ever loyal sons of the Church. But wherefore is Luther strong? Because while uttering his heresy he has also voiced the wrath that is nursed through all Christendom against the sins and worldliness of Rome. Not that Luther is so strong, but that Rome is so open to attack; that is what makes good sons of the Church, even as I, tremble at the days before us. Do you understand?"

"I follow the Emperor's argument."

"A hundred and forty years ago was the Great Schism; a pope at Avignon and a Pope at Rome anathematizing one another; Christendom shuddered. The Church was rent in twain. The Hussite heresy rose. Then later at the great Council of Constance, the schism was healed. Hus was sent to the fire. The Church seemed even as before; but wise men wagged their heads, 'A second schism will not be healed so easily. Let the Vatican repent of its sins. Let the Pope and Cardinals be true shepherds of their sheep.' That was a hundred years ago. How has Rome learned the lesson? Have recent Popes been better or worse than those of the

days of the schism? — Innocent VIII, whose deeds made his name a mockery; Alexander VI, mixing his Borgia poisons and plotting with his son Cæsare; Julius II, storming a smoking breach in his cuirass; Leo X, chattering Latin poetry and writing me lying letters about seizing hamlets in Italy, when lo! half of Europe is about to revolt against him! What, I say, have these ‘Servants of the Servants of God’ done to avert the day of trouble now come upon them? Answer if you may, Conte di Palaestro.”

As Charles had proceeded his eye had lit up, while his voice rang clearly.

“Nothing, Sire. But your Majesty surely argues in no manner to please the foes of Luther.”

“I am no friend of Luther,” he retorted, growing cold, “mark you that. But of these men of Rome I am become unutterably weary. Leo opposed my election as Emperor. I know the value of his promises to aid me against France. I owe him nothing. I will not spare him. I will save the Church but I will save it by scourging Rome. I have Germany, the Low Countries, Naples, Spain, the Indies, — God has given me power enough, — ha! All the world will thank me. In yonder portfolio are the *gravamina*, the bills of complaints against the exactions and evil doings of the Papalists, and signed by the most orthodox of German princes, men who would hurry Luther to the stake. Now for this task of purging I need a *man*.”

He spoke the last word almost fiercely, and his eyes were upon me.

“Conte di Palaestro, I need a man of good physical presence who will win the imaginations of the unthinking when they look on him; a man who knows Germany, that he may espouse truly the demands of Germany; who knows Italy, that he may meet Italian craft with craft; who is of the learning to win scholars, the breeding to win princes, the

experience in manipulating men to surmount obstacles; who has an iron will and is not prone to shrink from difficulties; finally, one whom I may trust to serve me implicitly in return for the honors I will gladly heap upon him."

Still he looked on me, and I was listening; but he had not finished.

"That man I will send to Italy clothed with the plenitude of my power. He will go to Rome and speak to Pope and Curia as they have never been admonished before. He will command the Vatican to purge itself of the extortions and malefactions which have made the name of Rome a byword and a hissing. Pluralities, first-fruits, nepotism, indulgence-hawking, expectatives, every other gross evil, shall cease altogether. Nay, that part of Luther's doctrine which impartial divines pronounce good and truly Catholic shall be embedded in the doctrine of the Church. My high deputy shall do all these things. If the Vatican hesitate, he shall have behind him every pikeman of Castile, every lanz-knecht of Germany. And *then* even Rome will hear him."

He paused, evidently expecting me to say something, and I made shift to remark.

"To find the ambassador the Emperor desires will be hard."

His eyes cut me through at a glance.

"I have found him. He is here."

Involuntarily my eyes roved around the room in a kind of maze.

Then Charles spoke again. His tone was passionless and prosaic. "He is yourself. I have studied your career and qualifications closely. You are both German and Italian. Because you are in a measure a dreamer is no disadvantage. You will therefore follow your object the more devotedly. You will have vast obstacles to overcome, but you will surmount them. I will bestow on you, if you wish, a Spanish dukedom, so that you may take rank above all great person-

ages, save reigning princes. You will not at first display armed force at Rome, but armed force shall not fail you when you summon it. I know Leo de' Medici. He will rage, threaten, but he will not fight. You will win the praise of all good Catholics and of your Emperor."

For an instant as Charles spoke I felt my senses reeling. I turned hot, then cold. I was thankful I was not pressed for instant reply. When at length he paused I strove desperately to answer calmly.

"Your Majesty has overwhelmed me. What am I to say? Regenstein and Palaestro are noble houses, but we are not princes of the blood."

"I am satisfied with your nobility," was the imperturbable answer.

"Your Majesty has omitted one thing. What is to be the disposition of Luther?"

The Emperor frowned. The question, I instantly knew, was unwelcome, but he answered it directly. "Inasmuch as this reformation is to be made *for* the Church and not against the Church, it is the more needful that I avoid open countenance of heresy. Luther is manifestly guilty of many matters touching not morals merely, but doctrines. He must return to Wittenberg; there the ban of the Empire will be issued against him, he will be seized and punished according to the ancient law touching heretics."

I stood in silence. Never had I felt my blood tingling more rapidly. My eyes seemed dimmed, though not by tears. Charles was still surveying me coldly, evidently expecting my answer. Realizing that to continue the present situation was impossible, I fell on one knee, and seized the Emperor's left hand (which he yielded limply) and kissed it, then spoke hurriedly. "Your magnificent generosity, Sire, has deprived me of my reason. Until I regain it how dare I answer. Pardon my prayer for an interval until to-morrow, ere I answer you."

Charles's pale face tinged with a faint shade of disappointment, but he beckoned for me to rise.

"You, like your Luther," he remarked with obvious irony, "take one day to hear, the next to answer. But your prayer is granted. Give me your word to-morrow when I breakfast."

He touched a silver bell upon the table. Instantly the doors opened, the attendants reëntered. As for me, I must have bowed decently, and departed past them. Surely I walked as men walk in their sleep.

* * * * *

I was prepared to endure threats, dishonor, imprisonment, death for the Cause — but not for this, dear God, not for this! No instant of respite was granted me for the barest reflection. Even on the other side of the cabinet doors a woman came towards me. I knew who she was by the fall and rustle of her dress ere ever I raised my eyes. It was Marianna. She wore a dress of sea green silk, close fitting and exquisite. White flowers shone in her hair. But I have praised her beauty often enough. I will not repeat. While I moved on in my trance, while I saw the grave Spanish courtiers looking at me very respectfully, as the man whom Majesty had honored with such privy audience, I felt her arm being put within my own. She led me back to the chamber above the Rhine where I had quitted Forli.

"Ah! Gualtiero, *mio carissimo*," she was saying close to my ear, "you have heard the Emperor, you have been offered the great embassy to Rome, you will be the most famous man in the world. They will worship the ground you tread upon,— ah! Gualtiero, Gualtiero."

"He has offered it, yes, Madonna." My mien and voice were doubtless vacant and gloomy.

"Offered it? Mother of mercies, and you have not accepted it? You turn mad!"

"I prayed his Majesty for permission to defer my answer until to-morrow."

She looked on me with eyes flashing at once infinite wrath and equal compassion.

"Till to-morrow? The most imperial proffer ever made in the world? The thing touching which my father came from Paris post-haste, and has conferred with the Emperor two whole nights? Is it you that rave, or do I not hear aright? Have you no words of gratitude to my father, to me whose part has not been small?"

She had one hand upon either of my shoulders, and was trying to catch me, to fascinate, snake-wise, with her glances. A little roughly I put her away.

"Madonna Marianna," spoke I, striving hard to control my powers, "for all you have done for me, so far as it was done in friendly kindness, I bring full gratitude. The Emperor has consented to await my answer, you and your father cannot show greater importunity than he. But know you this. My errand to Rome, if performed, will be a dreadful one. Your father and his friends will cry out the loudest at my scourge. I shall curry no more favor with His Holiness."

"We understand, we clearly understand. My father made it most plain to the Emperor he has no personal love for Leo. We know you will never mar *our* fortunes."

I held out my hand, beckoning her to cease.

"Madonna, if indeed your devotion is not of word only, do me one favor. Question me not, leave me unurged, unsolicited, this night and during the morning. As a free man, with a free mind and will I must decide the Emperor's 'yea' or 'nay.' Therefore no more of this. But tell me if I am a prisoner within this castle. What are the bounds to my liberty?"

"Within the castle you are wholly free. The Emperor has come hither with the Spaniards and Italians of his court to enjoy a few days of respite from the "ja's" and beer-swilling

of your Germans at Worms. The guards have orders to halt you at the gates. Inside go where you will. You were brought here thus secretly that you might break wholly with your heretic friends and your degraded past, that like a new star you might emerge to shine dazzling in your true firmament hereafter. Within this castle, saving a few menials and nuns, there are only men and women of the South. To-night you resume that glorious life broken off when the fiends tempted you to leave dear Italy, the life of laughter and noble mirth, of sunshine amid the roses."

But again I forbade her words. Prompted by some angel, I asked a question.

"You said there' were some German nuns within the castle. How is that?"

"How can I recall the name? An abbess from a strange abbey. She prefers residence here to the crowded town. Her chambers lie not far from these. The abbey of Qued — your German names are so rough! *Santo Dio*, you are white and fainting!" —

"I have been on the rack these days," I said, clutching a pillar, "you must bear with me. I need food and drink. Go from me, Madonna. Leave me to my own thoughts, or by my father's soul you are my foe forever."

My command was obeyed. She swept out of the room. I was too torn myself to consider whether I had wounded her needlessly. Very soon a smooth serving-man in the Forli livery brought in a tray covered with tempting viands. Again I observed that the cookery was truly Italian, the bottle of wine was from the Alban hills. But how could I complete the illusion, when under my eyes from the casement flowed the mighty Rhine, and the very breeze that fanned my cheeks carried the sniff of the giant pines and the budding oaks and beeches of the Black Forest? No, I was in Germany yet, and hard by was Worms, and in Worms was Dr.

Luther, who, Charles the Emperor had said, must be "punished according to the ancient law concerning heretics."

By an effort of self-command I made myself eat and drink. So doing I became calmer. I knew that I had been taken by the devil up into the exceeding high mountain, and shown all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and all these would be given in return for one little word of mine.

I could behold myself a very Hercules cleansing the Augean stables at Rome. What havoc would I not work among the white-handed Monsignori? I pictured to myself the casting out of their fair innamoratas, their simpering page-boys, the restoration of monkish simplicity at innumerable convents, the banishing of the huge swarm of Papal chamberlains, of the notaries who fattened on unjust litigation, of the general army of purchasers and sellers of ecclesiastical favor. The chaste honest life of the Church in the days of her holy poverty would return. Good men from all over the world would flock to second my efforts, and the performance of the lords of the Vatican would at length comply with their high profession, not weary God and man by the perpetuation of one vast lie. All this seemed within the scope of accomplishment. Was I not young? Was I not conscious of a mighty reserve of talent and energy? Was not the mere fact that the Emperor had chosen me as his instrument a token that I was well fitted to succeed? Did I not know Leo de' Medici as few others knew him; and could I not even hope to make him my supple ally?

The vision, the possibilities, the questions, at times made my brain reel. Thrice I arose, saying nigh audibly, "I accept, O Emperor." Thrice I sat. Clearer, ever clearer I knew acceptance of Charles meant the forsaking of Luther, Ilsa, the Cause. And I seemed to hear Dr. Luther's great voice saying "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul."

CHAPTER XXXII

I REFUSE CÆSAR

LATE in the afternoon I roused myself from my reverie. I had now chosen my path. I knew that no argument or consideration could swerve me from it. The consciousness that I had made the decision raised my spirits. In some measure at least I could divine the future. I asked the honor of waiting upon Forli and Marianna, and when I met them craved their pardon for my brusque behavior, explaining it, as well I might, on the ground of all I had recently undergone. They pressed me for my decision. I told them my first answer was for the Emperor, and they were fain to wait, but their gleaming eyes and cheerful gestures indicated that they regarded all omens as favorable.

"Ah ! Gualtiero, we know that at your best, you can match the wits of Cæsare Borgia," said the Cardinal, and then proceeded to tell with gusto how the foreign noblemen surrounding the Emperor had arranged an impromptu ball that evening, and that I was very welcome to attend if only I would appear in domino—as would indeed many of the guests. I consented, with an alacrity which no doubt heightened their expectations.

So for one evening I seemed almost recalled again to the Southland. A masker's dress was provided, sufficiently resplendent in gold lace and Flanders point to satisfy a Venetian magnifico. One of Forli's clever valets completed my toilet with a skill worthy of Andrea. When I drew my domino over my eyes, and stepped out into the corridors al-

ready full of silk trains and scarlet bravery, instinctively I felt the senses quicken, the blood rise. For the moment I was living even as I had lived before I heard the dread name — Luther.

A great hall of the castle had been used for the fête. A thousand candles swung from their hanging sconces. Fresh leaves and spring flowers hid the barren walls behind. From a bower of laurel sounded music, harps, and tender viols, and the music was not the stately rhythms of the north, but the pulsating, stuccato melodies of Italy or Spain. Under the lights moved all the high dames and dignitaries of Castile, Aragon and Naples who had followed the court of the Emperor; Spaniards with their stately grace, Italians whose vivacious talk was as much with their hands as with their tongues. From under the masks I saw dark eyes that had learned to flash languorously in the orange-groves of Seville or Palermo. On an easy divan by one entrance lounged Forli, smiling benignantly from his red cap and robe upon us all, yet lamenting that years and churchly dignity forbade him to join in the revelry. In and out of the thronging dancers went a woman in a lustrous yellow dress, its color made vivid by its trimming of black. The closeness of the fit and the low cut neck displayed her figure rarely. Despite her mask I knew that half the company identified her.

"Oh, marvellous creature," raved a Sicilian beside me, "the form of Venus, and the mouth of Juno! Who is she?"

"Ask not too many questions," replied a more contained Spaniard; "piety toward Holy Church forbids. For the sake of naming her, let me call her the Cardinal's 'niece.'"

"Ha!" laughed the Sicilian. "I understand."

But even as he spoke I saw the Portuguese ambassador, in all his cloth of gold, bow to Marianna, and an instant later she whirled down the great hall as his partner. The

spirit of the hour was upon me. Captured by the swaying music I offered myself to a tall, stiffly dressed Castilian, to my belief the Duchess of Lerida, and found her a very happy companion. Other dances followed. I forgot everything in the spirit of the hour. I was almost unconscious of the flight of time, as I exchanged harmless badinage with some Italian lady whose accent was Venetian, — when the voice of the master-ushers sounded, “His Majesty the Emperor!”

Charles entered by an upper doorway. Ten flunkeys carrying tall candelabra marched before him, making his entrance one blaze of light. The music stopped an instant, then revived in a fiercer, swifter strain. The Emperor seated himself upon an armchair upon a low dais, and I saw him despatch a page to summon Forli. The Cardinal joined the sovereign upon the dais, and conversed long. I would have given much to have overheard them. When the dancing resumed, by a kind of mutual consent all the revellers held back to make way for a *passionesa*. A tall Spanish gentleman advanced to the middle of the floor. He wore a long blue cloak reaching to his heels. To meet him came my lady of the yellow dress. Never had I seen Marianna dance more rarely. They went through the difficult figures with marvellous grace, leaping very high, advancing, retreating, sometimes almost sinking into one another’s arms, but never touching, and always facing one another. The hall rang with applause. I heard the Emperor’s “bravo!”

As the general dancing resumed I brought myself beside Marianna. Old instinct made me bow her my invitation. She held out her hands. Once in the dance I almost regretted my boldness. She was like a wild thing under my touch. Faster and faster we whirled, and her face was very close to mine. I felt her hot breath on my cheeks. On my forehead was the intoxicating touch of her flying hair. A strange

feeling of enchantment, bending my will, subverting my powers, seemed stealing over me.

"Gualtiero," she said out of lips all red and pearls, "Gualtiero! I have conquered, have conquered! *Caro mio!* let us dance and dance forever!"

But I would not kiss her, not even when we swung under the shadowy pillars by the musicians. The dance ended. I disengaged her arm, alleging that I saw a great French nobleman glancing her way, and of a truth it was probably the Comte de Ponthieu who danced with her next. Yet despite his well-trained gracefulness, it was a very cold and unresponding lady he led about the room.

Then as I stood watching the swaying glittering hall, the hollowness, the mockery of all this spectacle swept across my soul with a kind of nausea. Here were we, the noble and mighty of Christendom dancing our nights away while God's truth was being crucified, while human wrong and sin went unreprieved, while Dr. Luther lay at Worms with the ban of the Empire about to be fulminated against him. I was at the end of my masker's mood. The dancers were already beginning to scatter toward their several apartments. I went toward the rooms which had been placed at my disposal by Forli.

I had drunk again from the Southern goblet. The first taste had been sweet, but the dregs were bitter.

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As I left the festival hall no one seemed watching me, and for an instant a wild thought entered my mind of slipping past the guards, and out into the wide night and freedom. But it was unlikely that I would be allowed to pass the gate, and an unlucky attempt would make my last condition far worse than my present. One thing, however, I felt bound to do. Wandering around the great complex of passages, galleries, and cabinets that made up the state apartments of the

castle, I stumbled upon a yawning serving-man, who was evidently one of the regular denizens of the residence, and very glad to find a soul among his new guests who could speak a word of German. From him (with a little well-feigned questioning) I readily learned where lay the chambers of the Abbess of Quedlinburg, and thither I took my steps. I was not mad enough to try to penetrate the chambers of nuns, and I knew the chances were all against accomplishing anything, but to lie down under the same roof that covered Ilsa and make no effort in her behalf and my own comported neither with love nor courage.

And then for once Fortuna (treacherous lady!), was not wholly unkind. Near the entrance way to the abbess's apartments I found a balcony which by vast good luck actually overhung the great hall from on high. The dancers were dispersing now; the tall candles were flaring down in their sockets, but the weary viols were still scraping out their last numbers. In the balcony, intent on the sights of splendor below, I caught the leaning forms of two or three women. There was light enough for me to see them clearly. By their dress they were beyond doubt lay servitors of Quedlinburg, and my heart beat faster. Now or never I must play my game. Drawing my domino closer across my face, and adopting a rolling gait as if I were a cavalier who had partaken too freely of the *aqua vite*, I came up boldly.

"Holla! my fine wenches," cried I, in affectedly broken German, "I swear there has been a pretty sight down there under your eyes, but not so pretty as if some of you had been dancing yourselves."

The girls looked up, scared and simpering. They were quite of a class to take kindly to the advances of any individual with a mustache and the clothes of a gentleman.

"Oh! gentle sir!" began the boldest, "you make us blush. Surely you do not mean your fine words."

"Of a truth I do, by St. Maria. There is no countess or duchess down below with a whiter neck and a slimmer waist than yours, my pretty." And here with an abandon that did me credit as an actor, I put my sinful hand around the very body of one of the girls — to wit, Trude, with that mingling of force and cozening which will make the average country hussy pledge her soul.

"Oh ! sir, oh ! sir," began she, turning very red, "I am a poor but honest maid. My father is an honest man. I do not know you —"

"Come, come, my lass," I enjoined, "I mean not the least mischief, just that you walk with me a few turns in the gallery. If my Lady Abbess's maids wish to sit up late to watch his Majesty's ball, they surely must pay the dance-groschen afterward."

The other women cast envious glances at Trude. She hung back an instant, modestly fighting against the delicious flattery of being favored by even a tipsy gentleman in such fine clothes. I knew she dared not make outcry. Her mistress would never forgive such a breach of decorum by her servants as watching out the imperial ball, when they should have been in bed. In a moment I had her around the corner of the gallery where it was dark, and with no one listening in case she gave a little scream. Then my hand around her waist relaxed. I spoke to her in the broad Harzland brogue. When I told her who I was, she all but fainted ; but speedily, being indeed a girl of good fundamentals, recovered herself, and listened to me.

I told her rapidly but completely the story of how I came to be in the castle, and explained at least a part of my former relations to the Forlis, and my present predicament. Only the proffer made me by the Emperor I kept hid. That was a matter I scarcely dared to open even to my own soul. When I had finished this I began to press her to use every

means to communicate with Graf Moritz and Adolf and her own father as to my captivity, and to urge them to set some manner of watch to discover whither I might be carried in custody. "For though I seem so free to-night," I concluded, "I fear much I shall not be so free to-morrow, but again in close custody."

To my entreaties, however, Trude shook her head. She said the abbess had withdrawn Ilsa from Worms because her mistress had become thoroughly suspicious lest in some occult way her niece was giving room to thoughts and deeds unlawful; and that Trude herself was suffering from this same treatment. She had not been permitted to leave the castle since entering, and as for Ilsa, her aunt had confined her in a narrow chamber on bread and water. "No one in the castle talks anything but Italian or Spanish gibberish," the poor girl asserted. "I have no friends. The sight of so many strangers scares me. I know not what to do. Ach! liebe Gott, I wish we were all safely back in the Harzland!" A sentiment wherein I am sure I heartily joined.

Time was flying. I dared not linger with her longer. It was torturing to know that behind closed doors, so near at hand, was my Lady Ilsa, and that to her I could speak not one syllable; but what must be, must. I heartened Trude as best I could, promised a great reward if I got my liberty through her, and as a final bait told her that I would make any young peasant on whom she might cast eyes into a rich farmer. Then I took my leave, after sundry short but tender messages to Ilsa. Trude could only promise "to do her best," but I was a little comforted. Sooner or later she at least was bound to regain her liberty of action, and I knew she was a girl of resources and energy.

Returning to the Forli chambers, I met the Cardinal as he was being divested of his regalia, and he congratulated me upon my fine appearance at the ball.

"Many spoke of 'that elegant masked nobleman' and how charmingly he wore his clothes and swept down the floor with the ladies. Ah! Gualtiero, you will win vast credit for us yet. The Emperor was more certain than ever that he has chosen aright."

I fear I was not enthusiastic in my answer. I slept soundly, the good bed under me being a notable improvement upon the prison pallet. When I awoke in the morning it was already late. One of the Cardinal's smiling valets was at my side to tell me that the Emperor breakfasted shortly before noon, and that I was expected to appear then for audience. Again an irreproachable costume had been laid out for me, nor was anything omitted to enable me to look the part of the man whom the sovereign delighted to honor. I did not see Forli, but I was informed that he would be present at the audience. By the time my own toilet was completed and I had eaten some white rolls washed down with a little excellent wine, the noon hour was at hand and another smiling gentleman usher conducted me into the Emperor's breakfast room.

I had heard that Charles was an immoderate eater, and my eyes confirmed the tale. He sat in solitary state at a broad table, dressed as always in immaculate black, relieved only by a small cap of deep purple. Silent-footed pages bore in and out the large silver platters of roasts and highly spiced pasties. His Majesty had in truth a most Bœotian appetite, cutting off huge pieces of the hearty dishes, thrusting into his mouth large squares of bread, and at times signing to his body physician, a grave Bolognese, who would hand him a silver cup of wine duly admixed with some cordial. In the open space before the table a deformed Moorish buffoon in his motley, with a small ape, went through a series of antics at which the Emperor occasionally deigned a smile. When I entered Charles cast me one glance of recognition, then went on eating heartily, while by a door opposite I saw Forli

join us. We remained standing until the Emperor thrust back the last plate, and the pages had cleared the board. Then the cold, penetrating eyes of Charles, those eyes so young in years, yet old in intellect, were turned upon me. At a nod the courtiers and pages fell back beyond range of low conversation.

"Well, Conte di Palaestro," spoke the Emperor bluntly, in French, "you have considered. Your answer?"

I felt as if a bowstring were tightened around my chest, but I think my voice and mien were steady.

"May it please your Majesty, with a deep sense of the loyalty which I owe the Emperor, and speaking with the profoundest gratitude for the high favor I have been accorded, I am constrained to decline your Majesty's magnificent proffer."

The blood mounted to Charles's brow. The lip on his projecting jaw curled.

"I had not expected this, Conte di Palaestro. My commands are commonly obeyed."

I bowed obediently. "That which the Emperor commands me as Conte or Graf I execute with all diligence. It is when the Emperor proposes for me a commission to Rome proper only for a prince of the blood I feel compelled to draw back."

Charles reached for a quill from a plate, and picked his teeth nervously. His frown was very black. "Your reasons," he ordered brusquely.

"I will answer your Majesty even to the risk of offence. The Emperor would send me to Rome to enforce certain outward reforms upon Pope and Curia, which reforms it may prove needful to compel at the culverin's mouth. At the same time Martin Luther, instigator of these reforms, is to be burned as a heretic. I would to God the venality and worldliness of the Curia might cease, but will the Emperor

believe me in this,— the mere cleansing of the Vatican will be only as the cooling of the forehead of a man wasting with fever; comfort for the instant, but never the cure. We of the party of Luther would go beyond these palliatives. It is perverted faith which has led to perverted morals. The dogma and doctrine of the Church seem to us wholly wrong, so utterly beyond repair we may never mend them. Let us, therefore, turning reverently to the Scriptures, build with God's help a better Church, exempt from the inveterate errors of the old."

"Holy Mother !" swore Charles, half rising. "I asked you, sirrah, for a personal answer. I am given a heretical sermon."

I faced him steadily. A greater than Carolus Quintus would not have shaken me in the mood that held me then.

"Take not my refusal, Sire, as ungrateful churlishness. The Emperor's opinion and Luther's differ as to the crying need of the Church. With all loyalty to the Emperor, my conscience binds me to the opinion of Luther."

Charles surveyed me with mingled wonderment and wrath. "You are not flattering, Monsieur. The Wittenberg heretic is preferred by you to myself."

"Then let me name a higher authority. Your Majesty would reform the old Church. In other words, new wine should be put into very old and rotten wineskins. A wiser and mightier than the Emperor has long since asserted that this cannot be done."

The Emperor laid down his knife, and his suspicious scrutiny grew keener.

"Monsieur, if I did not know by indubitable evidence that you had thwarted the cleverest Papal agents in your intrigues to win the northern princes to Luther, if I did not know you had almost persuaded Leo himself to withhold his Bull, I could scarce believe you sane. Tell me now, on your knightly

word, do you profess your true reasons for rejecting the fairest proffer ever made by prince to subject?"

I bowed low. "Your Majesty has been pleased to seek some hidden motive in my words. I will speak more boldly. This man whom Rome and the Emperor deem worthy of the fire, I, with millions of others, esteem a saint. I have walked with him, talked with him, lived with him. Wizard or apostle as men may call him, for *me* at least he has been the restorer of hope in God and of joy in living. He has made me know that even a reformed and chastened Rome shall no more lord it over the souls of men. I dare to enroll this banned heretic as an apostle worthy of the right hand of God, and for Martin Luther and his cause I will spend my uttermost powers. I know I have not satisfied your Majesty. Yet it is better to seem even to offend the Emperor than to pawn one's soul."

We confronted one another silently for a moment, then Charles spoke with ominous mildness. "You appreciate, monsieur, that the rejection of the proffer I have made you under the conditions which you create, will lead to serious consequences for yourself. I cannot leave you as a fire-brand to scatter your sparks through northern Germany."

"I am entirely aware of the Emperor's probable disfavor. I counted the cost before I made my answer."

"But consider well, Conte di Palaestro. I am not wont to supplicate. Yet I have no other instrument ready for this stroke at Rome. I have pitched entirely on you. Do not let fantastic reasons ruin you."

"Can the Emperor spare Dr. Luther?" I threw out, with a gleam of hope.

"Impossible. He will return to Wittenberg. Perhaps ere the ban can be enforced, which will be some few weeks or even months, he will see reason and recant. Otherwise there is only one law for him."

"Then," I responded firmly, "I shall only deceive the Emperor by affecting to reconsider. I cannot go to Rome for your Majesty."

All this time I had never taken my eyes from Charles, to let them wander to the listening Forli. Now with a dry "ha!" the sovereign turned abruptly to the Cardinal. The prelate's round face was exceedingly sour.

"You have heard this fellow," spoke Charles, with a disdainful gesture toward myself.

"*Misericordia!* every word, Sire, oh! the foul *ammaliamento*, the witchcraft. Perhaps when Luther is burned and returned to his father the devil, the spell will vanish. My heart is torn at the despite he has shown your Majesty."

"He has at least saved his Holiness at Rome for a while from an unpleasant hour," spoke Charles, biting off his words one by one. "The sapience of your Eminence will no doubt discover the precise nature of his mad infection presently. It is sufficient that he will not execute my commands, and he is therefore remanded to your custody."

The Emperor raised his hand. A Spanish guards-captain approached instantly, and stood at attention. Then again Charles spoke. "This nobleman here is under arrest. It is to be understood that he is mentally unpoised and irresponsible. His Eminence of Forli has consented to conduct him back to his friends and estates in Italy. For many high reasons this case is to be kept from vulgar rumor. You will take the prisoner back to the Cardinal's apartments, and later the Cardinal will keep him in such a manner of custody as he may prefer, and take such measures as he may see fit for the conveyance of this unfortunate man to Italy."

The officer's hands fell on my shoulder. I drew myself up calmly, and offered him my walking sword. It was indeed a pitiful weapon, and he almost smiled as he took it.

"You see I am not a dangerous maniac, señor," said I,

under breath; then I bowed ceremoniously to the Emperor. He looked after me with his hard, fishlike eyes. Never again did I meet him face to face. Often I think of him, as he who might, had Heaven opened his vision, have been the friend, not the foe, of the Reformation; and by his skilful fostering of the Cause, have saved infinite tumult, and hatred, and blood; yea, have saved Christendom from being severed into two cursing and hostile camps. But it was not so ordered, and let no man forget that his Spanish mother was the daughter of Isabella the Catholic. Judge him not harshly; yet I hold he was one of the world's wise and mighty, who saw the hour of opportunity at hand, and then in Dante's phrase, "made the great refusal." . . .

All the way back to his chambers Forli followed me, his face crimson, and gnawing at his rings in sheer rage. Then he burst out, bellowing the words into my face.

"Fool!" he cried, "fool! German, German sheep and fool!"

As for me, I walked to my captivity right happily; I had not betrayed my soul.

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I had expected to be flung back into my prison cell, but that was spared me. On the contrary, I was allowed almost the same apartments as before, except now in my rooms all the windows were so high and small it was impossible to peer from them. There could be no illusion as to my fate, however. Hardly had I returned from the Emperor when a low-browed armorer entered, and stood before me sheepishly.

"It is commanded, your Lordship. Take no offence." And with that apology, and with a grin possibly sympathetic, he proceeded to snap about my ankles and wrists fetters, light indeed and not painful, but connected by thin, keenly tempered chains which effectively prevented me from taking more than the shortest step, or even moving my hands

enough for elegant eating. Hardly was he gone, than after him came Forli's chief body-servant with bowl, razor, and shears, who with a smirk fit to enrage a Socrates, bade me to submit whilst he shaved off my mustache and beard, and clipped my hair exceeding close, thus altering my whole appearance.

When this second emissary had departed I was fain to cast myself upon an arm-chair. The touch of the steel had set all my senses tingling. I held out my manacled wrists before my eyes as though I were gazing on something wholly apart from my own identity.

"And yet, and yet," I repeated aloud in a kind of wonderment, "an hour ago, on my bare word to the Emperor 'I accept your service,' I could have been envied by all the world. And now—" my voice broke in what was neither a sob nor a laugh, "I am truly glad!"

Nor was this last hypocrisy. I was in one of those strangely exalted states, wherein all the common goods of life seem to take on values wholly new. I seemed a prisoner as hopelessly as if I were immured in a Castilian Inquisition dungeon, or spiked to the bench in the Turkish galleys. I knew there was every chance that Forli would be able to execute his purpose of conducting me unhindered to Italy, and once there I knew enough of the bolts and bars of Papal palazzos to be sure of going forth a free man perhaps never, perhaps only when my hair was bleached to snow. Yet I refused to despair, I refused to tell myself I had played the fool and authorized Forli's anathemas. I knew that what I had done that day would stand justified to Ilsa, to Luther, to God. I cared for little else. And again, even as I felt of the strange steel upon my wrists, and heard the clink of the chains, it was brought home to me that I was to do some other signal service for the Cause, that in some great way, I knew not how, Luther and I had not been sundered forever; that I must

keep my head clear, my senses alert, my courage ready. Perhaps the call would come only after years of weary prison, perhaps in an hour; only let me not fail to do my part.

So passed that day, and so several others, and I was buoyed up by an unnatural kind of excitement which I think made Forli and my keepers sadly puzzled when they looked for some sinking of spirit. Then at length on a morning as I sat striving to read the Cardinal's new copy of Musæus, Forli himself entered and with him some high Italian ecclesiastic whom I did not recognize, but who doubtless was a member of the Papal legation. The newcomer started at sight of my ornaments, and Forli deliberately tapped his forehead and shook his head sadly."

"The case I have mentioned. Very pitiful. A fine young cavaliere utterly bewitched by the heretics. I am conducting him back to Italy with as little noise as possible. We need not fear to talk freely before him. He can do nothing."

I understood entirely that Forli had arranged to hold the dialogue in that place for my particular benefit, but that could not prevent me from being all ears.

"I understand the great heretic leaves Worms to-morrow," continued the Cardinal.

"Even so, Eminenza. He has refused all the terms of accommodation proffered him by the Archbishop of Trier and other prelates, who went to the very verge of true faith to recall him. He stands steadfast in his blasphemies."

"Then he will return to Wittenberg, and there await the issuing of the Imperial ban?"

"Such will happen, unless your Eminence can persuade the Emperor to violate the safe-conduct, and surrender him immediately."

"The Emperor is stubbornly fixed. He declares his word is pledged. 'He does not wish to blush like Kaiser Sigis-

mund, who surrendered Hus at Constance.' He will not recall his pledges."

The other prelate shook his head. "Then Mahomet escapes. The ban of the Empire is a fearfully slow weapon. Luther goes back to Wittenberg, and is surrounded by his friends. There are all manner of legal delays. Perhaps armies are raised for him in Saxony. Charles is about to lock horns with Francis. If the first battle goes in favor of the French, the Emperor will dare to do nothing to enrage the Elector of Saxony. A thousand zechins that Luther goes free!"

"He shall not," asserted Forli, with a stamp.

"I trust your Eminence can persuade the Emperor, then."

To which the Cardinal answered with a very vulpine laugh.

"*Caro amico*, it is a true saying of old Cosimo de' Medici that 'you cannot govern a state with paternosters,' nor save the Church either, as I add. The Emperor is too scrupulous. Good, then, His Holiness's legate must act without him. My mission here to Worms has been quasi-private. I can readily depart on some pretext and make no tongues chatter. I have often travelled incognito as a French nobleman. It will be very easy to overtake *il grande heretico* at some dark turn of the road, and carry him off bodily, as easily as, well,—as I shall carry off this unfortunate crazed gentleman. If there is danger of rescue, then," Forli's finger passed lightly across his throat, "but you will see how I shall entirely prosper. There will be a bonfire yet in the Piazza di San Pietro."

The second Italian regarded Forli in a kind of hesitant admiration.

"You are magnificent, Eminenza, but consider the risk of scandal! The Emperor will be furious."

"The Emperor will know nothing for long. Nothing until our fine friar is safe and snug in Italy or lying with his throat cut. Luther will simply vanish from sight. Good

Catholics will hold that his friend the devil has flown off with him. Then at last when the truth leaks out, bah ! the Emperor will prove a very sensible man."

"The Cardinal of Forli speaks with the just confidence of an Alexander."

"An Alexander Borgia," quoth the other, smiling subtly. "Come, Monsignore, we have much more to talk of, and we will leave this poor gentleman to compose his crazed wits by reading."

CHAPTER XXXIII

ILSA VICTRIX

ON Friday, May 3, 1521, a date never to be forgotten in my memory, quite early in the morning the Vicomte de Barras left Marburg with a portion of his company, on some hurried expedition, the precise object whereof he was not careful to announce. His niece with another portion of his cortège remained behind at the commodious *Blauer Engel* Inn. It was understood at the inn that there also remained behind the unfortunate crazed gentleman, whom it was necessary to chain and, at times, lest his cries become highly distressing, even to gag, and whom the Vicomte was conveying to his kinsfolk in Gascony. It is possible that some one of the inn servants imagined that the Vicomte talked with his people in a strange dialect sounding more Italian than French, but after all foreigners were foreigners in a small German city, and certainly the Vicomte was charmingly free with his money.

The good folk of Marburg would surely have marvelled much had they known how that nobleman rode out of Worms a few days before with a red cassock and a red hat, taking ceremonious leave of His Majesty's courtiers, as being about to revisit France to exercise the good offices of the Vatican in behalf of peace. A few leagues his company had travelled straight westward, then at a solitary spot in the road the master of the party had given a sly laugh. The cavalcade had halted. He of the red robe had dismounted, had exchanged his red gown and hat for a very secular blue

doublet and cloak, and a gray hat with a rakish heron's feather. At his side he had girded a long Toledo. Presto! the Cardinale di Forli had vanished, the Vicomte de Barras took command. The retainers had given a shout of approval. The melancholy, crazed nobleman had been allowed to peer out of the windows of his closed coach. The beautiful niece of the Vicomte had clapped her hands, crying in admiration "*Voilà, le galant gentilhomme!*" Then the leader had remounted, and briskly led the way, not westward now, but northward, passing close to Mainz but not entering that city, crossing the Rhine near Bingen, not on the regular ferry, but on the barge of some obscure water-man they hired towards evening. They had lain over that night at Rudesheim, then continued their travels very quietly, avoiding frequented roads, yet occasionally halting (so their most unfortunate prisoner could understand), to inquire of peasants and wayfarers, "Whether the famous Dr. Luther had returned from Worms that way?"

It was misinformation upon this point which undoubtedly brought them to Marburg, for a false rumor made that much discussed theologian take the northerly route towards Hesse, whereas later and more authentic tidings reported him as travelling by way of Frankfurt and Hersfeld. When the party had come to Marburg and discovered themselves upon a wrong scent the Vicomte was heard to indulge in many brisk oaths, proper indeed for a secular nobleman, though they would have been deplorable in the Cardinale di Forli. On the morning in question the Vicomte had held a rapid colloquy with his niece, wherein it appeared that it was necessary to overtake Dr. Luther with speed, and also necessary to keep their crazed prisoner in sure custody (it being possible to convey him only in the heavy closed coach). The Vicomte therefore resolved to take his best horses and the better part of his men and to ride post on his errand, while

the lady with her maid and four of their less active varlets would remain to guard the prisoner and await directions as to rejoining her uncle.

At about seven in the morning the Vicomte rode away. From a chamber window that luckily commanded a little view of the inn court the "melancholy crazed nobleman" (so the servants called him) could see the company depart. The Vicomte, despite his girth, carried himself excellently on a powerful stallion. His eight followers included three who professed themselves Frenchmen ("surely Gascons, they were so dark"), and five Rhinelanders and Swabians, tow-pated jail fledglings, strange birds to see in the retinue of so genteel a cavalier, "but, after all, honest Germans did not like to take service with foreigners, and travellers must take what rascals presented themselves for hire."

The prisoner saw the Vicomte depart. The clatter of hoofs died on the cobble-paved street. Dead silence seemed to reign through the inn broken only by the ticking of the great clock which stood behind the door of the room occupied by the presumable madman. The prisoner leaned on the casement, and studied for the twentieth time the view across the red roofs of the little city to the graceful green hill where rose Landgraf Philip's sturdy Schloss. He had been in Marburg before and knew that behind the inn ran the swift green Lahn, and that the winding streets of the town made it among the most picturesque in all picturesque Hesse. All this, however, did not relieve the fact that he was manacled hand and foot, and that a sullen, taciturn fellow, whose grunts seemed to prove him a Hollander, sat by his door with a heavy partisan. This was indeed only proper, considering the danger of the poor nobleman doing himself a mischief, yet it could hardly raise that individual's spirits.

About ten o'clock, after long contemplation at the window, and after being rewarded by nothing more exciting than the

sight of a vast flock of geese sweeping its hissing, honking way along before the skilful snapping of the whip of the blue-kerchiefed goose girl, the prisoner turned wearily back to the table, sat himself and began turning a Seneca's *De Clementia* which his captors had thoughtfully allowed him. The prisoner was exceeding quiet, and beyond possibly a certain hectic flush betrayed no signs of his occasional insanity, at least so his guardian Jan Praet may well have cogitated. From the Weinstube below came a drinking song, indicating how Jan's three companions were whiling the time away. It is certain he found watching the prisoner a tedious duty and allowed his thoughts and gaze to wander.

About half past ten one of the inn servitors came into the room, alleging he must fill the water jugs. Immediately he called attention to what Jan had not noticed before, that the hand of the clock was sadly broken and ready to fall off, a fact which (asserted the varlet) would make the landlord exceeding angry, and likely to visit his wrath upon the unlucky speaker as being careless. Jan was sympathetic. The injury was such as a skilful tinker could mend in only a few moments. Was there such a man about the inn? Jan professed himself a stranger. The other declared that he believed there seemed to be a clever fellow in the company "of the other great folk who came yesterday." He might be approached by means of an extra seidel filched from the keg room. Would Jan object if some one came at once to mend the clock? It would save the poor varlet at the least from a beating.

Jan hesitated. The lady had clearly ordered it, 'no one in the room with this prisoner except the inn servants, and then only for a moment.' Still what harm would it do? 'The poor gentleman was always so melancholy and silent. "Jan would look the other way, if he also had had an extra seidel and the fellow were quick about his business."

The varlet went out. The prisoner indeed sat very still. For days now the prisoner had been extremely still. Possibly in his heart he had resolved upon a policy of absolute passivity and non-resistance, until his guardians, convinced that the iron had sunk deep into his soul, should cease to maintain their catlike vigilance. In any case he seemed very intent upon the *De Clementia*.

Presently there was another rap upon the door. The question of Jan was answered in very broken German, that 'here was one who could mend the clock.' A strange, bent, red-headed man entered, who cast a single sidling glance upon the prisoner, then turned away, leaving the prisoner to stare at him and wonder, "where have I seen those eyes before." He laid down a few tools and addressed himself to the clock. Jan affected to be interested; "Are you a regular tinker?"

"*Mon dieu!* no! I am in the company of her Reverence the Abbess who came yesterday. I have only a little skill in such matters."

"So you are another Frenchman?"

"*Oui*," the prisoner however could swear as to the Italian accent. "I am a right Norman, from Rouen; do not insult me by calling me a Gascon like those rascals with the *Vicomte*."

The prisoner now was staring at the stranger very hard, but Jan did not observe him.

"Surely it is tedious here," commented the tinker, removing the hand from the clock. "Is this poor gentleman often violent?"

"They tell me he is. Anyway I am well paid to watch him."

"A fly could watch him, he is so firmly chained."

"Well, orders are orders. You must hasten. Finish with the clock."

"*Mon ami*," quoth the other, "I can never finish with

anything while that sweet breath of yours is coming over my shoulder, and you are watching every turn of my fingers. Ha! what's that by the door. A pigeon, I swear."

"A pigeon, I don't understand."

"A pigeon in petticoats, oaf! Look and see if I'm right."

A comely maid was indeed lingering just outside the door. The hang of her red kirtle, the droop of her mouth, said one thing clearly, "Come and talk to me." Jan did not wait for a second invitation.

By this time the prisoner had lost all interest in Seneca's *De Clementia*.

Still with his back to the prisoner the red-headed stranger spoke suddenly though softly, and this time all his words were Italian.

"Eccellenza, have the chains that confine your feet spread out smoothly on the floor so that it will take only one blow to sever them."

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As in kind of a trance I listened to Andrea while he talked in low whispers, interrupting his utterances frequently by loud pounding with his tools.

"So your Excellency is surprised? Ah! it was not so hard, not, that is, after Trude at last got to us; Andrea had been suspicious already. Graf Moritz wished to go to the Emperor with loud outcry. I dissuaded. There was no water in that well. Did il Cardinale think he could get away from Worms by such a shallow devise? Bah! did not a man in our hire track him? But we could not follow always. We must needs separate. Graf Moritz took the road to Giessen, I found the Abbess of Quedlinburg leaving Worms, and needing a groom. Very easy to win her service. Said I was a Norman pilgrim bound for St. Sebald's in Dantzic and working my way. She was pious and unsuspecting. I have talked with Donna Ilsa. She is very brave, worthy to be born in Siena. Yesterday

I was sure il Cardinale was going to Marburg; I told the abbess the roads were better this way. The rest? Ecco! The moment your feet are free we escape across the passage to Donna Ilsa's room. It is not so high above the ground as this. Easy to clamber down. Horses are below. Off for Giessen. A deed worthy of Andrea!"

All this time I spoke never a word, but watched the doorway across which Jan, as by a potent loadstone, was being slowly drawn. Trude simpered and smirked, answered his clumsy compliments with broad blushes, turned away her head when he beamed most tenderly; in short no trout on the hook was ever played more skilfully than the unwary Jan. His great bulk disappeared from the doorway. I could hear his feet going haltingly down the hall towards a convenient window, where his back would be toward the door, and he could lean delightfully out the casement with a very pretty face near to his. Andrea, whose red hair dye I was admiring vastly, and who looked a veritable Norman, continued assiduously at his work and whispering, sometimes straightening the offending clock-hand with resounding blows, until I saw his whole form squirm like a cat's. Jan was at the window.

"Now!" He turned like lightning. I stretched my feet, holding the chain taut on the hard oak floor. A hatchet of notable edge and temper flashed once, then descended. A blow worthy of a mastersmith! The chain at my ankles sprang into two glittering fragments.

Bounding to his feet Andrea caught the ends of the chains and thrust them in a twinkling into my shoes, then seized me by the shoulder and without saying a word half led half carried me across the narrow passage. Three long strides did it. By some occult power the door opposite flew open. I saw a figure in black standing behind it. Into the strange room,—and all I could see for an instant was a white, white face shining out from under the black coif.

"Ilsa!" "Walter!" Andrea was bolting the door, while we sprang into one another's arms. Oh, that moment, that moment! Gladly would I have paid for it with a captivity not of days, but of years!

Yet the period of our joy was one of a fleeting minute. Andrea was far too devoted a rescuer to let his fair project fail through overmuch lover's ardor.

"Away! away! Eccellenza! Release him, Donna! Instantants are precious. Jan may discover at any time. The Conte must have his wrists free in order to clamber down the vine trellis. There is much to do." He clapped his hand to his belt, then actually turned pale, "Diavolo!"

"What has happened?" cried Ilsa, first to win back her tongue.

"Call me the prince of fools!" raged Andrea. "I have left the pincers wherewith to clear the Conte's hands in the other room."

"Cannot I get down without them?" I demanded; but a glance from the window at a gnarled mass of vines that descended a sheer twenty feet convinced me that while an active man could do the deed easily, it were madness to try it manacled.

"I will lose no time," proclaimed Andrea, unbolting again. "I go and return in a trice; Trude can detain Jan a thousand years."

Boldly enough he flung open the door, only to recoil in absolute consternation. In our excitement and raptures we had heard no steps without; we were face to face with no less a personage than her Reverence the Abbess Theckla, and her companion nun, the dried old Sister Hemma. What fiend had prompted them to visit Ilsa at this instant, time lacked to discover. They crossed the threshold before even Andrea recovered enough to close against them. Face to face we all stood, while one could count a slow twenty, before

they found wits and we breath enough to speak a word. Then the abbess spoke, shaking all over with struggling passions. "Holy Mother! What — what is this!"

Moving by a kind of instinct I strode beside Ilsa. My hands were not too bound to place them upon her shoulders.

"Reverend Mother," spoke I tensely, "what you see is the Graf von Regenstein and his affianced wife."

But the horrified groan of the lady abbess was drowned by the scream of Sister Hemma. With a shriek that might have stirred the dead she flew out through the door, and instantly the inn resounded with her howlings.

"The maniac! The maniac! He is loose! He is assaulting Sister Ilsa!"

Almost at her flying skirts went Andrea. "He saves himself!" were the ungrateful words that came springing to my lips, when from the door of my former prison room I saw him bounding back again. In the left hand he grasped the pincers, in the right the huge partisan which in his unlucky moment Jan had discarded. But Jan had roused and turned like a startled wild boar. With a great roaring he made after Andrea, but the Sienese with a flying leap was before him. We slammed our door in Jan's face, and bolted it, whilst he beat on it, cursed, and yelled like a fiend.

In the inn below reigned indescribable confusion. "The maniac is loose!" twenty were bawling, and we heard the trampling of feet. Abbess Theckla made wild passes with her hands toward us. She would have flown at my throat, had not her strength failed her. In the tumult we could not follow her desperate reproaches. Andrea, whose brain had never faltered, approached me.

"They will be forcing the door in a moment, Eccellenza. It will go better if I release your hands."

"You cannot save me," I commanded; "save yourself. It can still be done. Get to Giessen and Graf Moritz. Tell

him the Cardinale di Forli, passing as the Vicomte de Barras, has ridden in quest of Luther to seize or slay him. Away instantly or Luther is lost !”

“It will be wiser to remain, and to save both the Conte and perhaps Luther also,” observed Andrea imperturbably, at the word wrenching my left wrist free; “now for the right.”

By this time there was a rush of feet in the passage, and a confused shouting. A good dozen were without the door, and while it was relatively solid and fitted with a heavy bolt, it was not proof against well-used axes. I shook my right hand clear. The sense of freedom sent the blood springing through my veins. Again I was myself, my own master, and on my powers that day hung not my own life only, but the life of Luther, and the hope and honor of the woman I loved. Should I be caught here again like a caged rat, to be drowned at the bidding of my captors? Not so! All my trust in God, all the blood of the Regenstein ritters of old cried out against it. With liberty so nigh, I could not dare to fail !

“Andrea,” I spoke, seizing the partisan he had so opportunely brought us. “We must play fox and lion alike. You are the first. I will be the second. Let us at least make our guests outside to hesitate. Ten minutes may be worth ten thousand ducats.” Then I raised my voice, “Ho ! you without there. If there is any honest German present not in foreign hire let him talk to me. I can prove readily enough that I am not crazed. This Vicomte de Barras is no French cavalier. He is of the spawn of Rome, a Pope’s legate, and he has ridden off to seize Dr. Luther. You who love Dr. Luther stand back, and do not damn your souls by helping his arch enemies.”

Whatever else my words accomplished they at least produced a momentary lull in the beating upon the door. There was a jangle of voices. I continued my admonishings, well knowing the prejudices of the average German burgher

folk against all Latins, crying out that I was a Harzland nobleman carried off by the crows of Italy, and promising great reward to whosoever would aid procuring my liberty and saving Dr. Luther.

"Do not heed his ravings," I heard a woman's voice urging in very broken German; "he is beside himself. Down with the door!"

The attack, however held back. I could hear angry arguments and counter arguments. The hint about Luther had been enough to rob Marianna's commands of half their force. It was no light thing in Marburg to be called the foe of the hero of Germany. After a space a familiar voice spoke in Italian against the keyhole.

"Gualtiero."

"I hear you."

"Admit me."

"Alone?"

"Yes. I would reason with you ere all is too late."

"Very well," I assented. Then I sent my voice out loudly, "The lady is permitted to enter. The man who strives to thrust after her dies instantly."

I took station by the door so that any forbidden intruder might feel the full weight of my partisan. Andrea opened a little. Marianna entered. For the first time she and Ilsa were face to face.

The Italian wore a short red travelling skirt and a richly slashed and embroidered bodice. Her dark hair was flying. Her eyes were like coals. A thousand passions were struggling on her face. In her belt was a long knife and a pair of the very small firelocks, called pistols. Ilsa stood calmly before her in her trailing black, a perfect antithesis: it was the meeting of southern heat and of northern cold. The old abbess, utterly terrified at one horror after another, clung desperately to one arm of her niece.

Andrea bolted again. Critical as our situation was, a grim sense of humor seized me as I saw Marianna staring in wonderment upon the silent nun.

"Madonna," said I, with a manner of flourish, "you have the honor to meet the most noble Lady Ilsa, soon to be Gräfin von Regenstein."

If Marianna had been a Medusa she would have frozen us with her eyes. Lightnings seemed to spring out of them. Without shame I confess to wincing, but Ilsa regarded her as calmly as a rock. Marianna's teeth shone like those of a beautiful beast when she flung her questions at the German, wholly ignoring my presence.

"So *this* is the woman who has stolen him from me?"

"I have loved him," was Ilsa's steadfast answer.

"Madre di Jesu, you are a nun?"

"Yes," came the wholly measured reply.

"And you dare to love him?"

"I do."

"You, a nun, will even talk of marrying him?"

"I will."

"Your vows? Pray when, gracious mistress, has His Holiness issued his dispensation from them?"

"God, bearing his message through Dr. Luther, has loosed them."

"A right approved and saintly deputy! Since when has this fine assurance come?"

"Not ten moments since, when Walter took me in his arms."

The word "Walter" made Marianna's face ashen. I cannot describe her glance of fury and incarnate hate.

"Prove then that you love him, you, *you*,—low, ignorant German wench, with the face of a she-goat and the modesty of an ape. You dare to set your love against mine —" But here Marianna's German ended. She dissolved in Roman

curses, lost upon Ilsa. I moved as if to end the fearful colloquy, then halted at a nod from Ilsa. Like a silver bell sounded the Harzlander's voice in answering.

"I have loved him enough to bury myself in the convent for his sake, to save, as I dreamed, his soul. I love him enough now to defy the world and marry him despite all scorn and hissing; for I know that God is better pleased that an evil vow were broken than kept. Betwixt you and me there has been a great battle for Walter's soul. With all your powers you have striven to drag him down to hell, and Satan has been with you. You are beautiful enough to pluck to damnation a saint. And I have striven against you as a weak, untaught mountain girl with only her white conscience and her prayers to save him from you; to save him and all his glorious gifts of heart and mind for the works of heaven. And I have won — have won! The dross has been purged out of him. On my side has been the dear Lord God, and He is stronger than the Master Devil. Therefore do you, most fair and sinful lady, leave us to live our lives, and may you repent in peace."

"You have won him?" repeated Marianna, in a kind of wan agony, her lips blanched and drawn.

"Even so." Ilsa looked at me. I nodded. The face of the Italian flushed crimson.

"Perdition! Am I not southern born? Can I stand here a smiling fool? You have won him? *Evviva!* Then let the bridegroom lead home his bride. *Ecco! —*"

With the last word her hand flew to her belt, she drew a pistol and fired; but with the flash I smote aside the barrel with the shaft of my weapon. The ball found a victim, but not the one intended. With a direful scream the old abbess released her niece's arm and fell a white heap upon the floor; across the smoke-filled room we stared at one another horribly. Marianna dropped the empty pistol and stood gazing for a

moment in a stupor. Ilsa seemed unable to stir or speak. Andrea cast himself upon the fallen woman, but rose, shaking his head.

"The heart — *instantemente*," was all he could articulate.

"Murderess," I found power to cry, and was making to seize Marianna's other weapons, when an echoing shout without the door told how our truce was at an end.

"There is murder within! Force open! Secure the mad man!"

"Down the trellis, Eccellenza, down the trellis, while I hold them back," Andrea pleaded. As he spoke, however, a rush of men swept the door almost from its hinges.

"Impossible," I retorted. "Can I leave *them*? This attack must be checked until these men will listen to reason. The only chance!"

A second blow smote the door inward, wrenched clear of all fastenings. Half a score of faces seemed crowding after it. Weapons were tossing. Curses flying. But the strength of fifty seemed in my arms that day. The great partisan danced over my head like a willow wand as I swung it.

"Back, swine," I thundered, "or be I mad or sane, I will brain you all."

Wherewith I drove the poleaxe on the shoulder of one hulking villain of the Forli crew and sent him down with a mortal yell. Andrea had snatched a chair and with a dexterous side blow felled a second less fatally. They gave back a moment, gathered for a second rush, then made it; with God's help I met them.

Once an axe stroke missed my shoulder by a hair's-breadth. Twice a boar-spear was thrust into my face, and twice I swept it aside. The mighty Jan was foremost in the attack; a great good fortune, for his bulk clouded the whole door and forbade other attackers. He had snatched a broad-axe somewhere and thrust forward recklessly. Once driven

from the narrow opening I was lost, but my assailants fought with poor generalship. I held my own, and Andrea, whipping out a murderous dirk, added shrewd blows beside mine.

Then as we fought, and as the inn resounded with the horrid cry, in a dim way I knew that, though my eyes were ever to the front, there was a strange combat waging behind me. Only later did I learn it all; yet I could hear my assailants calling to one another as they peered past me, "Holy Christ! The women! The women! The nun and the Italian."

For what befell was this. Even as the door fell from its casement Marianna had reached for her second pistol, but had never drawn it. Around her wrist had gripped the hand of Ilsa, a clutch like steel. Breast against breast, their hot breath smiting one another's faces, they had fought. Struggling, tearing, panting, till Ilsa's black serge flew in a myriad tatters; and still they waged their battle. Once for a desperate instant they had paused, and Ilsa, in a kind of irony, cried, "What will you?" To which Marianna shot across her teeth, "If I die I will be buried, if I live, you will be." And with that resumed her battle.

Then at length, and I am glad I saw it not, though I glory in it all, Harzland strength and German love triumphed over Italian storm and hate. Marianna's dagger sprang from the sheath, but it was Ilsa's hand that grasped it. The weapon went deep to another sheath — the breast of Madonna di Forli. Again a cry, a shrill, long cry, agonized, inarticulate. I turned my head. Beside the slain abbess I saw lying the form of Marianna.

That lapse of mine was almost my undoing. I was carried backward by a new onslaught led by Jan. He bounded into the room. In an instant the rest would have followed; we would have been hewn in pieces before any could hearken to a word; but even as I swung my partisan and strove by

one last effort to beat him down, Ilsa did one deed more. I saw her bend and take from the lifeless grasp of Marianna the second-pistol, then straight over my shoulder she aimed it as coolly as when she levelled on a Harzland doe. The black serge of the sleeve swept against my cheek. Close to my ear went the rattle of the wheel-lock. The thunder flash ! Through the cloud of smoke I saw the mighty Jan sinking to his knees. I ran to the door, my weapon flashing terribly, and the rest cowered back like sheep.

"Enough of folly !" I trumpeted, and at length they heard me. "I am not mad ; but this Italian woman has murdered the Abbess of Quedlinburg and striven to murder this nun. We fought only in defence of our lives. I am a German nobleman, the free Graf von Regenstein, and can prove my name and sanity to any magistrate. Now you who love truth, justice, Germany, and Luther make ready swift horses and escort, for this French Vicomte di Barras, who is in truth the Cardinale di Forli, has ridden after Dr. Luther to seize him and burn him at Rome."

They heard me readily enough now. The fall of Jan had robbed them of all stomach for fighting. The landlord of the inn came forward, pitifully distressed at recent happenings under his roof, and anxious at all costs to still the tumult. A grave Sir Councillor of the city appeared, a man who had read all of Dr. Luther's books and who loved the Cause right well. My clothes hung about me in ribbons, my face was bloody, I had a shrewd wound on the thigh ; but I could still put on dignity and talk as became the Lord of the Regenstein. In ten minutes I had convinced these worthies that my tale rang true. In ten minutes more they were ordering the fastest horses in Marburg under saddle to speed us to Giessen, to join our other friends, and ride as seldom men ride, to save the hero of Germany.

Only when all this was done could I turn back for words

with Ilsa. She had not left the room of battle. They had taken away Jan, still alive, and with a passing chance to recover; but on the two beds lay the silent forms which an hour before had been the abbess and the Italian. Ilsa's dress was tattered beyond telling. The black coif and white veil had vanished. Over her head the short nun's hair was scattered in golden curls. As I came to her she cast herself into my arms. There for a good moment she sobbed, and we had joy together. At last she looked upon one of the beds.

"Was she indeed so evil?" she asked gently; "she was very beautiful."

I could not but smile, though I fear not merrily.

"She was like all of us — all saving you," I said; "full of evil, but of much good also. She was from the South, and lived after the manner of her people. Leave her judgment to God."

"She loved you," spoke Ilsa, in a whisper. "She truly loved you, though her love was not pure. I will ever judge her kindly."

Then I led her from the room, to the one where I had been prisoner, that we might be away from fearful scenes.

"Ilsa," I said, "I heard what you said to Marianna. Is it true? Will you marry me?"

"Whenever you say, Walter."

"Ilsa, the Cause will triumph. We will save Dr. Luther. There is yet time. In days to come the convent doors will open. Many nuns will go forth to the new Christian liberty. They will be happy wives and mothers. Dare you be the first?"

"I dare." Then with a toss of her head of elflocks, while her form shook with great sobs, she asked amid a dreadful laughter, "Ach! Wälterchen, do you not think I have been proved without vocation for a nun *to-day*?"

"I think," answered I, "a greater than Leo of Rome has this day cancelled off your vow." Then I continued, "Last night I seemed hopelessly trapped. They held me utterly. My confidence broke down. I reflected on how Luther was betrayed, the Cause doubtless ruined, you doomed to a life of clouds and grief, and all in the end because once I had welcomed the bad love of a sinful woman, and now even in the days of repentance could not cast off the consequences thereof. I felt almost as a new Judas, cursed on earth, and damned in hell. At length I prayed, 'Oh ! Lord take away my life, nay, blot out my very soul. Yet let me die as a man, not as a sheep ; for the memory of the ill which I have wrought will drive me mad through all eternity.' And now heaven has answered — this." Whereat I kissed her.

After a little I drew her to the window, whence I had gazed as a chained captive only two brief hours past. Before our eyes rose the glorious mount of the castle, its slopes all clad in the young spring green.

"Now," I repeated aloud, "let not death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, separate me from Ilsa, my true wife, bestowed on me by the great love of God !"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DEED UNDER THE BEECHWOOD

It was six good leagues from Marburg to Giessen. We put our horses at speed, but the afternoon was half sped when we clattered over the stones of the little South Hessian city. We lost more precious time in searching the inns for Moritz and for my own retainers, who had wisely attached themselves to him. At last at the "Landgraf" we found them. Time fails to relate all the laughter and greetings, and what I said, and Moritz said, and Ilsa said, or how Adolf and Gunter almost hugged me like bears when they fairly had me. Then when the raptures had ended we held a hurried but sober council. Forli had nigh ten hours the start of us, and I had not been able to overhear, in my captivity, all the details of the route he intended to follow. The only thing whereof we could be certain was that he was posting for Eisenach, and that near that city Dr. Luther had intended to halt and visit his kinsfolk. There seemed nothing for it save to spur after, and to trust to such tidings as we could get along the way to guide us more securely.

Then when this seemed settled Moritz and I both looked at one another and spoke one word.

"Ilsa?" Manifestly it had been impossible to leave her amongst strangers at Marburg, as manifestly it seemed impossible to leave her alone at Giessen. I was even talking of seeking whether a local nunnery could harbor her a few days, when Ilsa cut all knots for us.

"Dear brother, you know all that I am to Walter and what

I wish to do. Could I not ride with the best over the slopes of the Brocken? Give me a horse. I will show myself your sister still. And then come what may," her hand stole into mine, "we shall always be together."

Moritz pursed his lips and frowned, but ended with a laugh.

"Another horse," he ordered. And then he looked at Ilsa's clothes. For though at Marburg we had called into requisition one of Sister Hemma's cloaks, a nun's dress was a strange enough habit for a ride like ours. But Ilsa's face turned rosy red; a red that did me good, her cheeks had been pale so long. "I will ride, brother. By the time the horse is ready, I am ready also. Leave the rest to me and to Andrea." So we suffered her to quit us, being ourselves full of such matters as sifting out the best of our men, providing weapons, and looking to the saddlery.

At last, even as we ordered "One side-saddle" to the grooms, forth to the courtyard to greet us came as pert and smiling a page-boy as ever wore a red doublet, high black boots, or a rakish green cap and feather, which sat delightfully upon a mass of waving golden hair. How Andrea had found the costume, time lacked to inquire; but I was long past wondering at his legerdemain. Moritz frowned again; but who could deny her now? Lightly as a sprite she bounded to the saddle of my tallest palfrey, and looked down on me, smiling radiantly.

"Do you wonder, Walter, why I am not lying pale with horror at this day? Do not ask me! Do not ask me! I only know that I am like the bird who has broken his cage and whose wings are catching the air. I may have leisure for dread and trembling some time; to think of the awful end of Aunt Theckla, and — that woman. But now I remember only this. I have you, and I am free!"

Our chosen troop was at length mounted; Adolf, Gunter, Andrea, two Blankenburgers, Ilsa, Moritz, and myself.

I was the last to swing into the saddle. I should have known that my wounded thigh was paining me, but I never felt it. Out of the gray Ost-tor we thundered. The good steeds under us had been chafing long. We felt their lengthening gallops as they caught the road. For a long time Ilsa and I flew on side by side through the soft air of the deepening evening. We did not speak often. From time to time we talked with our eyes, and a flash told all we would say. We whirled through the little red-roofed Hessian villages, now down the winding river roads, now under a steep where a black pinnaced castle cast over us its jagged shadows. The blue smocked peasant girls stopped to marvel at us, we flew so fast.

As we rode I fell to musing on how it was scarce four years since that other early evening when I had rowed with Marianna upon the yellow Tiber beneath the domes of Rome. Four years! Four centuries seemed that hour away. As I looked on Ilsa and her tossing hair, felt the great sword now at my side and thought on the manful task ahead, I strove to go back to those other hours, the long dalliance over Theocritus's Idylls and Lorenzo's love sonnets, the tinkling lutes in the rose gardens, the rustle of fans and silk, the delicate minstrelsy, the soft words and the sensuous glances. Vanished! All vanished — to a past as dim as Egypt and her fabled kings! I knew now I was a true son of the fighting North, whose music had been the jangling ring-mail and the snort of the speeding stallions. I felt my breath come fiercely like the hard blasts of the Baltic wind, and my blood was aglow as the blood of many a Regenstein had glowed when they spurred on the hostile hundreds. I had found my bride. Yes! And I had found my true faith in God and in myself. Wherefore should I not rejoice in life's fair span?

"Walter," spoke Ilsa, riding very close, "wherefore is your face so set and stern?"

"Is it?" was my reply. "Then I was thinking of Dr. Luther and his peril."

"We will save him! We will save him!" she kept repeating. "The dear God has been with us this day. After the rest — how can we fail?"

So onward we swept, till the night closed down, till the stars shone clear above us, and a young moon made the track of the road just visible. The horses grew weary at last, but we pressed them, hoping to make our relay by midnight. Once we were halted at a forking of the way till Gunter found a cabin and a grumbling peasant. I knew that Ilsa's head was hanging heavily long before we saw the great towers of Fulda traced against the violet-black sky. The gates of the town were already closed, but Adolf knew of a kind of inn outside the walls, and hither we turned, just after the great abbey clock within the ramparts sent twelve strokes pealing into the silent night.

Much ado we had to rouse host or horseboys. However, at last convinced we were no bandits, there was a racing with lanterns and unbarring of doors, and we clattered into the courtyard.

"Eight horses in two hours, mine host," was Moritz's order, banging his sword as he spoke it; "and the fiends to pay if they are not fresh or are late."

"Your Lordship commands the impossible," was the deprecating answer. "It is scarce two hours since a great French gentleman rode away with our best, and his own beasts had been ridden from Marburg."

"From Marburg? And when did he set forth?"

"Why, one of his grooms swore he had started at dawn, but near Ehringhaus his Lordship's saddle-girth parted, so that he had a pretty fall, being a gentleman of weight, and they had much delay ere they could ride again. His Lordship was cursing like the Grand Turk's janizaries all the time

he tarried here, although whether from pain or at the delay I know not. I have none of his language."

We all breathed easier. Again heaven had prospered us. I fear I had no great grief at the posterior pangs of his *Eminenza di Forli*. We had made up most of the chase, but to wait till dawn while our own horses were resting was impossible. We argued long with the landlord. Money and threats could not move him. "I have no horses," was all his answer. Moritz was desperate, but I knew one last arrow.

"Master Host," spoke I, after sullen argument, "will you still say 'no horses' when I say that saying that means a heretic's death for Dr. Luther?"

"Ei! Dr. Luther?" and instantly he blew another tune. So I told him for what wagers we were casting, and in a twinkling all was changed. "Dr. Luther to the stake? Oh! the glozing papist dogs! Horses you shall have, though I pillage every stable in Fulda."

So we waited, while many lights were lit, and men ran in and men ran out. I cannot tell just how mine host made the city gates unlock, and gaping grooms lead forth fresh palfreys; all that I left to Moritz. For myself I stood guard, hand on hilt, while Ilsa lay snug and warm on a great straw stack in one corner of the inn yard, hid from any ken save mine and that of the friendly moon. She had fallen asleep the instant she had touched her rude pillow. Pacing sentry before her couch I felt even as a would-be knight, keeping his vigil around the high altar all the dark hours before his accolade. I almost grudged the promptness wherewith the new horses were gathered. Once or twice I cast my eyes on her, a dark heap upon the yellow pile, then withdrew my sight as from a dazzling mystery whereof I was not worthy. And ever I kept repeating, "God is with us. God is with us."

Two hours at least she slept, before Moritz's call summoned "All is ready!"

I stepped across, and with infinite reluctance touched her hand. "We must be riding, Ilsa," spoke I, as with a little sigh she turned and rubbed her eyes.

"Oh! blessed waking," was her first cry. "I dreamed I was again in the convent, and Aunt Theckla had ordered me to lie all night on the chapel stones spread out like a cross. Can I ever forget!—"

"I will aid you," I said, my arm under her.

Her step was not so blithesome as when she mounted at Giessen, but she carried herself bravely. Moritz thanked and compounded with our zealous host. We rode out into the black night again. The inn lights were engulfed behind us. Then with only the stars and the sentinel arms of the great trees to point our pathway, we gave our new horses the spur, and once more for a long time Ilsa and I rode silently, side by side.

It was a magic night. The touch of the spring was all in the air. The very ground was soft and spongy under the flying hoofs. In our nostrils blew the delicious odor of green things growing. Sometimes we were whirled by great black farmsteads where wakeful cocks crowed as we passed, and sleepy dogs arose to bark fitfully as our hoof beats died in the distance. Sometimes we saw the dim glint of the hurrying streams, and our horses plashed with cool strides across the unseen pebbles of the fords. Insensibly we knew the paths led upward, height succeeded height, we were skirting rolling hills which lifted spiked summits of trees against the faintly traced skyline. I knew we were entering the famous Thüringer Wald, the mighty forest land which rolled away, westward and northward, until it merged into our own wilder Harz.

Mentally I counted the leagues as we told them off. Four

hours' start Forli had possessed; but one great thing was in our favor. Dr. Luther at least would not travel by night, and the Cardinal would hardly be mad enough to attack him in his lodgings; rather, fearing no pursuit, he would follow at safe distance until the Wittenberger's little company was on a solitary road, ere speeding his foul arrow. I knew the chances were still even as to ultimate failure; that any mistake in the road, any least delay, would ruin all; but after the deeds of the past day I could misdoubt nothing. Every creaking tree, every chattering brook, spoke the same words, "God is with us! God is with us!"

At length as we rode with our faces towards the East, we saw the first bright bars that tell of day. Touched by the red enchanter, rocks, streams, woods, and uplands were leaping out into glorious being. The horses themselves found again their speed and carried us swiftly forward. And with the young dawn full on her face, Ilsa turned to me and spoke, "Dear Walter, do you believe in omens?"

"Just now I believe in them implicitly."

"And so do I. We have ridden out of the darkness into the light. We will ride in it hand in hand forever."

Our horses kept pace as we flew on together. If Moritz saw me riding with Ilsa's hand in mine, no protest came from him, dear fellow; and so we sped out of the Maytime twilight into the Maytime morning. From overhead, all out of sight, came the song of the soaring lark, closer down, so that the soft leaves whipped in our faces, was the whisper of the uncounted beeches. Weary as we were with the sleepless night in the saddle, the morning air came to us like wine.

"God is with us! We will save Luther!" so we called to one another, and mounted another steep.

The sun had fairly given us the new day when we whirled into the one long wandering street of Liebenstein, nestling

between its guardian hills and beside a clear-flowing little river. We felt not need of food, nor drink, nor rest; but for the sake of the horses we were fain to halt for a little baiting and to ask a few questions.

"Had a party of riders passed before us through the village?"

The brawny hostler nodded. They had spoiled his sleep a good three hours before. Eight to ten men, well mounted and armed, and seemingly hot on the road to Ruhla where the Eisenach highway came in from the west.

"Is Dr. Luther in Eisenach?" demanded I with a quickness that made the fellow start.

"Why, yes, your Lordship; that is, he was reported as spending the day there with his kinsfolk, and about to set forth this morning for his former journey homeward."

"Hark you, my man," I asked, not mincing further words. "Are you his foe or friend? Do you love Germany or Italy the best? If Luther and Germany, give us a guide. It is his life or death we ride for."

"Luther and Germany? *Donnerwetter!* what may I do for *him!*" He spoke it out in a kind of wrath at seeming to be doubted.

So again we had a friend, and were off again, only waiting long enough for Humfried, a very zealous and honest fellow, to clap a saddle on an ungainly but fairly swift pad, and ride himself to guide us. The chase was ending at last in very truth, though only heaven knew the fortune of our hunting. Humfried could tell with a certainty the glade where the Ruhla road crossed the main highway from Eisenach, and here, unless all calculations failed, we would find the Cardinal in ambush for his prey. But would we be in time? I knew Luther's habits well; how sometimes he set forth before cockcrow. Once or twice even my warm hopes would falter, and a shadow of fear would cross my mind. To come so

close? to fail? Ah, Heaven which had done so much, had not that bitter cup in store!

But whenever I doubted I was reassured by the flashing light in my Lady's eyes, and she spoke the word that had cheered us all the way.

"God is with us!" And I only answered, "Even so — yet faster!"

Onward and onward, with a view now of Schloss Altenstein upon a distant crest; now ever mounting the hillocks; now flying with deadened hoof beats under venerable pines across their carpets of needles; now into the clear sunshine of green meadows; now again under the shimmering green and gold of the kingly beeches. Suddenly Humfried, who rode at our head, held up a warning hand and drew rein.

"Softly. Here is the glade," he enjoined. Our horses fell to a walk. We crossed a swift little brook, and mounted slowly a steep slope. Before us opened a wide green lane, closed in on either side by the dense forest. There we halted. For a moment our senses caught nothing more noxious than the purling of the brook and the rustling of the trees, but Gunter (sly forester) pointed down. The fresh tracks of many horses were on the clean sod beside the way. Dismounting and nosing around like a fox he quickly made plain whither the party had turned aside into the greenwood. Humfried confirmed his judgment. Manifestly Forli (who doubtless had with him some rascal who knew the country well) had withdrawn into the dense covert overlooking the angle of the Eisenach and Ruhla roads, whence any traveller upon the former was at his mercy. Our task was exceeding plain.

"Ah! Wälterchen, must it be again — these?" asked Ilsa, for the first time on the ride a little pale, when she saw me look to the charges of my pistols after we dismounted.

"Would that I could pleasure you," I replied, with a shake

of the head. "It is men's work now, and not woman's; but pray God it is soon over. There will be no blood if I can spare it; yet what must be, must."

She was hardly pleased, but refused to abide with the horses, which we tethered a little back of the way. I ordered her, however, to walk the last, and she obeyed reluctantly, the more reluctantly as I strode first, beside the guiding Humfied. With every man's weapon at hand, we forced through the underbrush. Luckily the ground was soft with rain. The fresh young twigs bent noiselessly. We attacked a party equal or superior to ourselves, but in that moment we would have gone against forty with full confidence. Suddenly we halted by a friendly thicket. Before us opened a little plat of greensward. Horses were tethered beside it. To the left the bushes sprang apart a little, giving a fair view of the Eisenach road. Here seated carelessly on the grass, was a villainously bearded sentry with one eye upon the highway, the other upon some pleasant pottage that was cooking in an iron pot over a snapping fire of sticks. The rest of Forli's party lolled in easy attitudes around the blaze. His Eminence himself, rosy and portly, a trifle heavy-eyed perhaps from hard riding, but seemingly having borne his galloping exceedingly well, sat a little apart, propped up against a saddle, while before him with numerous airy gestures squatted the estimable Ettore Orosi, talking a voluble stream of Tuscan.

"I do assure you, Eminenza, by my honor as a Christian and Catholic bravo" — so I caught the clapper of his tongue going — "that it was only the malific evil eye which that most damnable heretic cast over me, which thwarted my most admirably conceived attempt upon him at Worms; but that attack you will graciously recall, was made in the night time; while the learned and ingenious virtuoso Giuseppe Salvali of Bergamo assures us that wizards, though most potent under stars and moon, are correspondingly feeble in clear sunlight."

"*Si*," assented the Cardinal dryly, "no doubt the valor of Signor Orosi is improved by a bright morning and plenty of armed friends. Ho there, fellow! Does a wagon seem to be coming down the road?"

"Not a crow or hare is in sight," answered the sentry.

"Well said, unless your worthy watchman will deign to look the other way," spoke I in Italian, emerging from the thicket as unwarned as a ghost. Forli leaped to his feet as men rise from adders' nests. His eight gallows-birds clutched for their weapons, but I seemed utterly unconcerned. In my right hand I held only my blue riding cap.

"A fair morning, your Christian Eminence," I continued, shaking out my cloak with deliberation, while Forli for once looked abject and aghast. "And may I ask for what noble enterprise the Pope's Legate watches the roads like a bandit in this our poor northern Thuringian country?"

"How in the name of all fiends! — How, save by Gany-mede's eagle, came you here?" at length articulated the Cardinal, not forgetting his classics even in this crisis.

"How? Why Dædalus made me a pair of wings, to be sure. I am certain your taste will approve the allusion." Over my shoulder I could see my friends silently spreading themselves in the thicket, while all of Forli's startled men crowded up behind their master, their group absolutely at the mercy of our levelled tubes.

"Has Marianna —?" began the Cardinal at length; "have you glozened her into releasing you? Oh! folly of womanhood, rightly says Juvenal —"

"Blame her not," I commanded abruptly; "enough that I am here sorely against her wish, could she but know it. It was not *she* that released me."

"Who, then? The Emperor? Even he thought we went to France. He knew nothing of this."

"A greater than Carolus Quintus, Eminenza."

"You are jesting. Who released and sent you?"

"A certain high personage, yet one much despised in Rome, and whose pleasure has been little studied by your Eminence."

"An end to riddles. Explain."

"I will name him in German, for it is here men seem most to honor Him, *der liebe Gott!*"

"*Gott?* — *Dio?* — Chatter of no miracles, Gualtiero. Why are your eyes so terrible?"

"Because, Eminenza, we should cast aside our dominoes, and call the mask at an end. You seized my person foully, designing to hale me back to Italian bondage. You cozened the Emperor into consenting to your deed. You went a step further, and contrary to his known wishes, you would now seize the very deputy of heaven, Dr. Luther, in face of the safe-conduct. Let us understand one another. I am free, and go not to Italy. Your further plot is doomed to completer failure. Either bid your men to submit here and now as prisoners and yield your own person, or by the Power that brought me liberty at Marburg, you go to the prison house whence none go forth."

The Cardinal looked at me stupidly, his ears refusing to accept my utterance.

"I? Papal and Apostolic Legate? Surrender myself a prisoner?"

"Do not hesitate," I commanded; "I use no child's words."

Heaven knows whether he saw my party in the covert, and whether he would have yielded or fought; but at this instant I beheld Orosi, just behind his master, doubling like a cat and pulling a crooked and wicked blade. One instant more and Ilsa were widowed before her bridal.

"Fire!" I cried.

The thicket around burst into the death flame. The great charge from Gunter's bell-mouthed arquebuse sang past me.

Mercy we had shown that midnight in the garden at Worms, but the blast was pitiless now. Huddled together, Forli's men fell like grass under the sickle, those unhit tumbling in sheer fright. Orosi had bounded half of the way toward me before a ball caught him in the groin. He fell right at my feet, waving his sinful weapon, and struggling desperately to reach me yet. But before I could draw to despatch him, Andrea had leaped past me with his own stiletto.

"Mine, Eccellenza," rang his call; "such carrion is not for the sword of a cavaliere."

The two grappled fiendishly. For a moment I feared Andrea had met his match, but right speedily I saw the Sienese writhe to the top, bend back the other's right wrist, and send his own weapon home to the fifth rib. A mingled curse and howl, and Ettore Orosi was forever saved from the hangman.

"Bah," spoke Andrea, rising and coolly wiping his knife. "And he called himself a man of *vertù*!"

I, however, had Ilsa beside me now. She was white enough and all of a tremble, nor could I convince her at once that I was totally unscathed. Our men were seizing such of the enemy as still survived, and pinioning their arms. They were too scared for either resistance or flight. Both of the other Italians who followed the Cardinal had caught the full discharge and would never need a dungeon.

Moritz had run at once to Forli. It had been impossible to spare him from the volley. A large ball had torn through his lungs. He was spitting blood upon his rich doublet as we raised him. Adolf, experienced in war surgery, gave him one glance.

"How long?" questioned Moritz.

"He will last an hour, hardly more," spoke the veteran as complacently as though passing judgment on a speared stag. Yet Forli's eyes opened at the words, and from him came a dreadful cry.

"One hour! One hour! Oh! to die now, here, thus! Where is the priest? The confession? There is no absolution, no viaticum; I am damned forever. The devils will have my soul."

"Calm yourself," I enjoined, contempt struggling with my pity; "recall your vaunted philosophy. How often you have praised Lucretius and Epicurus, and their disbelief in immortality. If you cannot die as a good Christian, die at least as a good pagan, and die as a brave man."

But the Cardinal only raved the worse. "No viaticum. My life has been one vast lie. I have held the honors of the Church and lived the life of a Turk. Ah! Marianna's mother—how I treated her! Years ago—I see it as yesterday. I was in all Pope Alexander's plots. I have feared neither God nor devil. Now —"

More blood rushed to his lips, and for a moment he ceased moaning.

"It is possible to fetch a priest from Ruhla," I remarked, melting fast, but Forli raged on again.

"No! no! I'll have none of your pattering country parsons. What is their viaticum worth? 'Absolvo'—a fool can say it. I'll not believe it though spoken by Leo de' Medici. Who is the Pope but the Master Rogue of all? If there's a just God, he'll damn me for all the absolutions and benedictions in Christendom. Oh! God, God!"

He was passing to awful blasphemies, when straight past me moved Ilsa, and I beheld her kneel by the stricken man, put her pure, soft hands against that coarse, sensual face, and under her touch for a moment he lay still, gazing with his dying eyes up into hers.

"Pray," she commanded in the slow Latin she had learned at the convent, "pray to the Lord Christ; without priest or masses, even now He can forgive."

Wonderingly he looked at her.

"Who are you?" he asked; "are you one of Fra Angelico's seraphs winged down from heaven?"

"I am a simple German maiden to whom God has been exceeding kind."

How their dialogue might have ended I know not, for Adolf plucked me by the sleeve.

'Countly Grace, a wagon is coming down the road from Eisenach.'

We left Ilsa still kneeling by our victim. Our men ranged themselves behind the great beeches along the way. Moritz and I exchanged assuring glances. Long since on the ride we had resolved what disposition to make of Dr. Luther if once Forli's band were happily settled. In the midst of our scene of tragedy, not ended yet, must come the brighter dash of comedy. The wagon, the familiar vehicle I had followed all the miles from Wittenberg, was nearing rapidly, only the Imperial herald no longer rode before. As it approached I could see the occupants; the driver, the friar Johannes, honest Amsdorf, and, joy of joys, my dear master. Unsuspectingly it rattled onward. At a slight rising the stout horses fell to a walk. I gave a whistle. Instantly two of our varlets were at the heads of the team. I sprang from the covert with my sword flourished high.

"Stand all of you. Submit quietly. We seek only Dr. Luther."

Adolf levelled an empty pistol at the driver's breast. Gunter whipped out an oath worthy of a corsair. The unvalorous friar Johannes clapped his hands to his head and leaped down, bellowing mightily. Amsdorf, of nobler metal, was reaching for a knife, when my voice made him look on me twice, and despite my shaven face he knew me. Dr. Luther, who at the first onset had turned a little pale and clasped his hands, now flushed with a great light springing out of his eyes. In a low voice I spoke to them.

"Dear friends, you know I love you and the Cause right well, therefore fear nothing. But Dr. Luther must now come with me instantly, and do you, Magister Amsdorf, swear to all the world that you know not whether friends or foemen took him, nor whither they vanished."

I seized Dr. Luther with some show of roughness and forced him out of the wagon. Johanne was already running up the Ruhla road, crying "help!" and "murder!" We let him flee. He would not reach a house, Humfried said, within a league. We thrust back Amsdorf into the vehicle, and Gunter, with more sly curses, bade the driver "lash his beasts as if the devil were after him, and never look around save as he wished to be chased by a bullet." The frightened fellow obeyed instantly. The wagon was soon following the friar at full speed. Still, with mock roughness, we hustled Dr. Luther back into the covert of the beechwood, and then once face to face, with no part to play, I fell into his arms, nor do I shame to own to manly tears wherewith his also mingled.

"O gracious Heaven!" he cried when he could pass to words. "Oh joy, oh joy! I was sure the black dogs of Rome had devoured you in Worms, and I should meet you only in the Golden City. And you are here. You are here."

"Here, dearest master," spoke I, "and Providence has been good to me, for I have saved you." Yet even in my delight I could not forget him who lay dying. In a few words I told how we had sore need of a priest. Quickly as I could I led him, still trembling with his joy, backward to where lay the Cardinal, under an imperial beech tree, with his sinful head on Ilsa's lap.

"A priest," I announced simply, for the pallor on the wounded man's face told how time was pressing, and Forli looked up at us with dim, wistful eyes, inviting the other, yet dreading.

"Who is this man, a great noble?" asked Luther with a glance at the rich dress.

"Dear Doctor," I said, "you are to hear the confession of Giovanni Paratini, called Cardinale di Forli, *legatus a latere* from the Holy See, who half an hour since lay ambushed here, to hurry you a prisoner to Rome. God adjudged otherwise."

"Who is this stranger?" cried Forli with a fearful gleam of intelligence.

"Your Eminence has asked for a priest. I bring him the fairest pardoner in the world — Dr. Martin Luther."

A great shudder passed through the Cardinal's frame; he raised his head from Ilsa's lap.

"Oh! blessed Mother of God," he cried, "have you no mercy? Am I not to be damned for enough sins without having your curses added? I sought your liberty and life. They have taken mine. Is not the reckoning washed clean? Spare me — spare —"

But here, with a tenderness infinite, Dr. Luther had dropped by the side of the dying. Gently as had Ilsa, he took the Italian's hands in his own. And I thought as I stood gazing that Forli was happy even among dying sinners, soothed as he was by the noblest man and the noblest woman on God's wide earth.

"To curse you, dearest brother? And wherefore should I curse? Are you not one of Christ's sheep, and had He pity for only the ninety-and-nine who never went astray? And shall I, the servant, keep my wrath when forgiveness is proffered by the Master-shepherd?"

"Poetry; you are speaking of dreams," cried the Cardinal, "hate has been hate, and vengeance vengeance since the world was. I care not what the Church says. Oh! my sins, my sins."

Dr. Luther raised his hand, entreating. "Withdraw all

of you, all but the lady (he did not know Ilsa's name as yet). Our Lord has said, 'this kind came not out save by prayer.'"

So we removed apart, every man bent on his own thoughts, until the pardoner spoke softly. "Return. The end is near."

Forli's head still lay on Ilsa's lap, but in his dim eyes there was now a little token of peace. He looked at me, as if trying to form a question, but strength was failing for utterance. Luther made the words for him.

"He is seeking to know whether you forgive him also?"

"Cardinale di Forli," said I, "for whatsoever thing wherein you have wronged me I forgive you every whit. May God show unto you all the pity and love He has revealed to me."

A faint smile passed across the Italian's face.

"It has all seemed a beautiful tale, a Platonic myth, this forgiveness of enemies. Yet, yet—" his words came in faint whispers, "if you and you can forgive, perchance God can do even likewise. It is all very strange. Tell Marianna so, and tell Leo de' Medici we at Rome were wrong —"

No more. The blood rushed from his lips. His head fell back with the death pallor spreading on his face.

"*Requiescat in pace*," spoke Luther solemnly. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting unto everlasting."

Ilsa rose from the ground, while her brother cast a cloak over the form of him who had been a Prince of the Roman Church, the keenest critic of art and poetry in all the Eternal City, skilled in diplomacy, wise in counsel, the first pupil of Alexander Borgia."

"Who is this lady, so strangely dressed?" asked Luther, setting his gaze on Ilsa, and for the first time I knew that he had never met her.

"Dear Doctor," I said, "this is the Gräfin Ilsa von Blankenburg, full soon to be my wife."

Ilsa colored scarlet for the first time, at thought of her manly

dress, but little enough recked Luther. With a great stride he went up to her, with never a "by-your-leave" he held her glowing face close to his and kissed her forehead.

"Dearest daughter," he said, "I have remembered you in my prayers now morning and night these many months, ever since Walter brought me his burden touching you. I am taught again that God is stronger than the devil."

He released Ilsa, and for a moment she tried to follow as we turned back to the horses; but in a moment I saw her color all fade to snow and like a crushed lily she was falling when I caught her in my arms. We laid her on the grass, and for a little I feared she was even as Forli; though brook water splashed on her face made her eyes open, and my first terrors end, her state, was very plain,—battling for life the day before, in the saddle all night save two hours rest on a strawrick, and now the dread scenes of this morning,—even we strong men knew we would be unstrung and lame for many a day. With my own arms I carried her, despite my limping thigh, to my horse and bore her before me in the saddle. Adolf protested he was stronger and far less wearied than I, but with such a burden, I could have played the Titan.

We laid the body of Forli across one of the captured horses, rough graves had been digged for the slain, the prisoners were duly strapped to our varlets' saddle bows; a smart run we would give them ere they were lodged in some fit dungeon.

"Will not Forli be traced, and you be called in question?" asked Luther as we moved away.

"He has gone to France in the interests of peace," I replied sagely; "it will be a long time before our friends at Rome pry too carefully into the precise place and circumstances of his vanishing. It would shatter too great a wasp's nest. Doubtless we will hear that he died of disease in some obscure inn on the Paris road."

So we left the glade with its triumph and tragedy. Humfried guided us by secret ways, up and down paths among the black beech stumps, until my own senses were mystified as to our route, only I saw by the sun that we were working steadily northward. Often we traced the edge of low precipices where unsteady horses would have fallen, and I would clutch Ilsa to my bosom fast ; but little by little we came again out of the enshadowing greenwood, until at last down a wide natural avenue in the trees we beheld a wide patch of blue sky, and rising against it a lordly hill crowned by a lordlier citadel.

"The Kaiser Schloss," announced Humfried, pointing; "the Wartburg."

"And here," added Moritz, "my good kinsman the Castellan for the Elector of Saxony will give Dr. Luther safe refuge until the present storms are passed."

We galloped down the slope, and again by leaf-hidden ways ascended the steep, till the shadow of the great square tower of the Schloss was cast far over us. Then armed sentries challenged, the portcullis rose with chains loud rattling, and I saw the stalwart form of the commandant striding down to the gate house from the keep. Of a sudden I knew that I also was utterly spent and fainting, almost as was Ilsa. I was painfully wounded. I had slept little for many nights, I had been stretched for as many days on the rack of mental and spiritual agony. Dimness swam before my eyes. "Saved !" I urged upon myself, "saved ! what folly to fail now."

I remember giving Ilsa into the hands of her aunt, and away they took her amid a great flurry of women. Von Steinitz and his officers were standing by and pelting us with questions. Then even as I strove to dismount a wide black void seemed to spring up to enfold me. I was not conscious for many days.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE BRIDE OF WARTBURG.

“‘FOR, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.’” So sounded the voice of Dr. Luther at my bedside, the first day I had strength and consciousness to see him. I marvelled at his dress. He had thrown off the monkish cowl, and wore a tight-fitting brown doublet and hose, the true garb of a knight. At his belt was a small dagger. On his cheeks was a ten days’ growth of beard.

“Ah, dear Doctor,” said I, “how do I behold you? You will soon pass for a very *lanz-necht*.”

“‘Doctor?’” spoke he, smiling, “none of that. Junker Georg they are all calling me, and tell me I am a ‘knight prisoner.’ They have given me a noble chamber, where I can sit aloft in the region of the birds, and they say to me ‘*nolens volens* I must do this or do that.’ But, thank heaven, they have not taken away from me ink and paper. Von Steinitz and his lieutenant, Von Berlepsch, are exceeding kind, and tell me after a little I will be suffered to ride out with a servant, and to enjoy the good green world. In the meantime if you are well, I am well, and, for that Christ be praised!”

So we talked together until Ilsa came in, with the roses again in her cheeks, and sent my master away, telling him I must not be wearied with talking longer.

Pleasant always has been to me the Maytime, whether in

southland or northland, but never fairer than then, in those sweet days of gold, when strength and clear mind were returning day by day. Every morning our walk from the castle grew longer, as Ilsa and I sought out some flowery mead beside the singing brooks, and like children made ourselves flower crowns, and flower chains, and chattered of how we would play the King and Queen in the Regenstein, and rule with a loving tyranny over all our vassals. Von Steinitz had pulled at his beard a long time when I came, with Moritz at my side, to ask for a speedy wedding, even at the Wartburg, with Ilsa.

"Pardon my slow wits," he had protested, "it is no light thing to talk of bridal with a nun, even though this old world changes fast."

Perhaps it was the tidings that had drifted into the Wartburg only the night before, how the French Ambassador had quitted the Emperor with threats of instant war from his sovereign, that sent down the scale in our favor. It was like enough his Imperial Majesty would have plenty on his hands besides chasing Saxon heretics and enforcing vows of celibacy. In any case our petition prevailed. "*Donnerwetter!* Let them marry!" had been the decision, and although his good Freifrau made difficulties, these were mostly over the shortness of the time for preparing. "No great linen chest! No great assemblage of guests! When had a daughter of the family been married like a miller's lass?" At which Ilsa had only laughed like rippling water, and vowed she was ready that selfsame day — yes! though she wore the clothes wherewith she had ridden from Giessen, an assertion at which her aunt dissolved in horror, redoubled when I vowed I was right willing to take Ilsa home that moment without more costly dowry.

* * * * *

On the afternoon before the day set for the wedding Ilsa

escaped from the clutches of the Freifrau and all her frantically busy women. She wandered forth with me, and we went hand in hand down the slopes of the fortress mountain, scar-ing a deer among the saplings, following along a grassy glade and stream which the castle folk called the Annathal, till we must needs thread the sinuous, rocky ravine of the Dragon's Dale, thrusting our way through the moss and ferns and harebells, whilst under our feet ran the glistening, cool water. Beyond the ravine we clambered up the hillside to a little eminence justly named the Violet's Mount, and there we sat long and happily in the grass, whilst Ilsa made fragrant wreaths for both. After we had talked long of a thousand things I said to her:—

"It was on a day like this, and almost a place like this, I found you first in the forest. Do you remember?"

"To the end of time."

"I heard you singing before I saw you. I have often wondered what were the words of that song. Do you remember them also?"

"Yes." But she had turned red.

"A fitting spot! Give me the song again."

"Not now, Wälterchen, not now. Although I own the place is appropriate, for it was Walter von der Vogelweide's song, and his home was at the Wartburg."

But I insisted, and whilst I watched with dozing contentment from the grass, Ilsa lifted her golden head and sang in her sweet clear German the old song of the Minnesinger.

"Under the linden
Out in the heathland,
Where we so gayly played,
There will I find him:
Soon we'll together
Sit in bright flowers arrayed, —

Whilst from out the wooded vale.

Tan-dara-dei ! —

So'll sing the nightingale.

“ In the green meadow

There 'tis I found him,

How my love greets me there !

Gladdest of women

Who is more blessed,

For *he* has found me fair ?

Kisses ? — A thousand blow,

Tan-dara-dei ! —

How red my mouth must glow !

How I am cherished

Only one knoweth.

(Hide it, dear God, my bliss !)

How he caresses,

No one, aye, no one

Save *he* and I see this.

None,— save for a little bird.

Tan-dara-dei ! —

Keep still of what you've heard ! ”

“ Tan-dara-dei ! ” The word came as an echo over our heads. We both rose very suddenly. Behind us was standing “ Junker Georg,” very august and knightly indeed, in his ritter's dress and beard ; we stood looking one to the other sheepishly for a little, while his honest sides shook with laughter.

“ Oh, my dear children ! ” said he at last, “ if heaven would only teach the Emperor and the Pope the joy which even they might win from an innocent song and a wreath of wood violets, how happy this beautiful world would be.”

And with that he moved away, shaking his head when I begged him to tarry, though I vowed to Ilsa, who had never

heard him sing, he had a voice full worthy to join with hers. There were long shadows over the mountains when we re-entered the castle. The Freifrau was angry with her niece "flying abroad when this was the last chance for fitting her velvet gown, as if there would not be time enough for cozening after the wedding — that is, if you two fools are still of a mind for it." As for Dr. Luther, he was in better spirits than ever.

"His Grace the Elector is very kind. He consents to my remaining hid at the Wartburg until all peril is passed. But he is a better friend still; Spalatin will send me the books. Even here I can shoot my bullets at my friends of the Curia, and, Deo volente, I will give them one great culverin shot that will gall them shrewdly."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I will put the Bible in German, to be sure, so that the veriest ploughboy in the land will stand in no need of Latin or priestcraft to find the way to his loving Father."

So I knew that even in his hiding, my master would speak for the Cause more eloquently than with a thousand sermons at Wittenberg. . . .

The next day we were married. Freifrau von Steinitz vowed the simplicity of the festival was scandalous; but she was a woman of potent resources, and there were enough officers and their dames at the Wartburg to give us all the pomp and ceremonial right-minded lovers could wish. Under the rainbow lights streaming through the colored windows of the chapel, the very chapel where St. Elizabeth of Hungary knelt for worship, we knelt together, Ilsa and I, and Dr. Luther (so again for the nonce we called him) joined us as man and wife,

"And those," sounded his deep voice, "whom — despite sinful vows and all the devils in hell — God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

Then we had a great fête in the famous Sängersaal, where three hundred years earlier Walter von der Vogelweide, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and the other minnesingers had joined their contest. And as we danced in honest, homely numbers to a few rasping viols, with Ilsa's head crowned not with pearls but with wild roses, I thought of that other dancing not yet two months gone in the castle by Worms, when Marianna had whirled in my arms, and an Emperor had watched us. But I said not a word to Ilsa, and for myself I had a happiness passing utterance.

There was wine enough, and boar's meat and venison enough at the feast to satisfy even Adolf. At the end they took the "Brautschuhe" from the feet of the resisting bride and tossed them to the unmarried damsels, and the lucky two who won them were vowed to be sure of dancing at their own weddings full soon.

The next morning, with Adolf, Gunter, Andrea, and a few other stout fellows for escort, Ilsa and I rode away. It was another June day of living green and light and fire. In the castle court all were gathered to wish us god-speed; but my master stood out from the company, and we bowed our heads to take his blessing. First he gripped me hard by the hand, and spoke the words he afterward used touching his own glad marriage.

"Walter, go forth with grateful heart, and be sure of this, God's highest gift on earth is to have a pious, cheerful, God-fearing, home-keeping wife."

Then more clearly he spoke in the hearing of them all.

"Dearest friends, depart. And know that now are days when the spirit of the Lord is returned to the earth, when old evils are passing away, when all things are becoming new. Yea! even now may the word of the prophet be fulfilled. 'It shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your old men shall see visions, and your young men shall dream dreams. The sun shall be turned into smoke, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. But it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered.'"

Silently he kissed both Ilsa and myself upon our foreheads. We mounted and called "*Auf wiedersehen!*" I at least with a catching of the throat.

"*Auf wiedersehen!*" answered Dr. Luther. And so we rode down the rocky way from the Wartburg.

A long time we went silently through the glorious country. Our horses were headed North. Far, far away we could see the swelling crests of the Harzland. We were riding homeward.

"Did ever folk go forth on a fairer day," spoke I, at last, for the sake of breaking a silence growing tense.

Ilsa tossed the blue tassel on her hat. "Or with fairer hearts within," she answered, with that sweet mingling of grave and gay which made all people love her. "Oh! I have joy in the greenwood, in the brooks and in the flowers, the sun on the slopes, the shimmering in the trees; but it is a joy not as in the old days at Blankenburg. For then even over the sun's great disk hung the shadow of the overmastering fear, the fear of God's pitiless wrath. And now, lo! the bands are broken, the prisons are emptied, the shadows are gone. The dear God is our father, the blessed Christ is our elder brother, we need not priest, nor mass, nor vows, nor pilgrimage to go to them. Wherefore then should not the world be bright? All this we owe to the love of heaven."

"And under heaven," I added reverently, "to the friar of Wittenberg, Martin Luther."

AFTERWORD

The memoirs of the worthy Graf von Lichtenstein zum Regenstein place on the lips of Martin Luther various utterances for which this book is the only proof that he actually made them *at the time alleged*. It is inherently probable, however, that the memory of the narrator has not failed him, for there is often abundant witness that Luther expressed very similar sentiments at some other time and place, but under like conditions.

The modern reader of this book will of course make due allowance for the lack of historical perspective and for the possible personal prejudice of a writer who was an actual participant in the noteworthy scenes which he depicts. Certainly could one question the highborn narrator he would disclaim intention of casting fresh fuel upon theological conflagrations now so happily begun to smoulder, and he would profess that he had only desired to make real to us the wonderful personality of the friar of Wittenberg.

Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

W. S. D.

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